30TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

MOJO

The Music Magazine

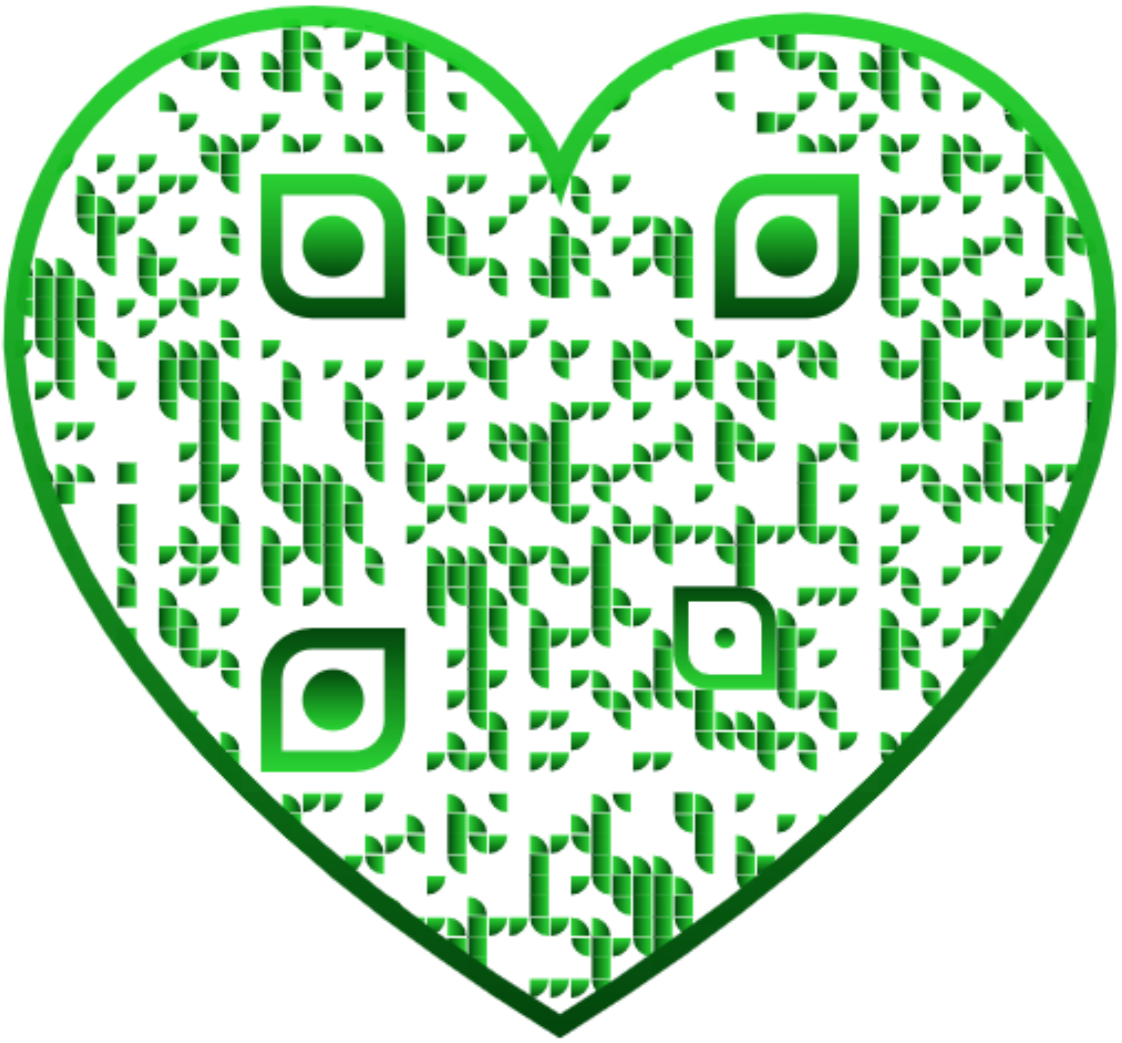
PLUS! 30 STARS FOR THE NEXT 30 YEARS!

30 YEARS of MOJO

Starring

BOB DYLAN
KATE BUSH
PAUL McCARTNEY
PAUL WELLER
ROBERT PLANT
DOLLY PARTON
KENDRICK LAMAR
JACK WHITE
ARCTIC MONKEYS
LANA DEL REY, BECK
BLUR, OASIS

And the **MOJO** pantheon!



CARGO COLLECTIVE

CARGO RECORDS

GOAT
MEDICINE
ROCKET RECORDINGS LP / CD

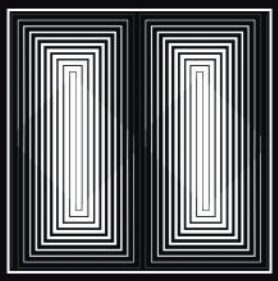
The mysterious, masked collective from Sweden return with their most psychedelic album yet – so whatever your dosage, it is now time to take your medicine.

ISLET
SOFT FASCINATION
FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

The genre-defying Welsh group define their vision with a breath-taking new album. An ecstatic experience in music, an explosion of emotion subsumed in sound - filled with high energy cadence & meditations on collective joy.

LEE GAMBLE
MODELS
HYPERDUB LP / CD

On 'Models', Lee Gamble takes the concept of pop producer to its logical extreme, examining how intonation and language is engineered to monopolise our attention, in a bewitching symphony of earworms and dreamy simulacrums.



THE VACANT LOTS
INTERIORS
FUZZ CLUB LP / CD

'Interiors' is the new album from Brooklyn duo The Vacant Lots. The Alan Vega protégés deliver a collection of minimal post-punk infused with disco-on-downers dance beats, lacerating guitar riffs and icy detached vocals.

TEETH OF THE SEA
HIVE
ROCKET RECORDINGS LP / CD

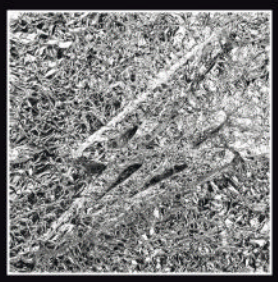
Sixth album 'Hive' is an alchemical headspace where monochrome animates into vivid colour. A transmission which transcends anything Teeth Of The Sea have thus far offered in their time on Earth.

EMMA ANDERSON
PEARLIES
SONIC CATHEDRAL LP

Lush co-founder Emma Anderson is one of the most underrated songwriters to emerge from shoegaze and Britpop. Her solo debut - produced by James Chapman (Maps) - combines effervescent electronic pop with psych and folk textures.

WILL BUTLER + SISTER SQUARES
WILL BUTLER + SISTER SQUARES
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

Open-hearted dance parties and haunted emotional landscapes from Grammy winner Will Butler and the fantastic Sister Squares. LIMITED EDITION NATURAL WITH BLUE SWIRL VINYL.



SAY SHE SHE
SILVER
KARMA CHIEF RECORDS 2LP / CD

Say She She, the soulful female-led trio, stand rock solid on their discodelic duty with their boundary-breaking sophomore album Silver. The combination of feel-good grooves & tantalising harmonies are sure to get you dancing.

GRAILS
ANCHES EN MAAT
TEMPORARY RESIDENCE LTD

An improbable blend of melted 1980s softcore and daytime soap opera soundtracks, cosmic minimalism, aching Westerns, melancholy electronic pulses, and massive soul-disco strings.

MATANA ROBERTS
COIN COIN CHAPTER FIVE: IN THE GARDEN
CONSTELLATION LP / CD

The new chapter in their celebrated Coin Coin series, recorded with an octet including Cory Smythe, Darius Jones, Ryan Sawyer and more. Produced by Kyp Malone. "Roberts is a major talent." (The Wire).

MELENAS
AHORA
TROUBLE IN MIND LP / CD

"The third album from Melenas finds them evolving their jangle-pop into a reverie of motorik, Neu-indie soaked in electronics and brimming with promise. Ahora is most definitely of the now"

BENÉT
CAN I GO AGAIN?
BAYONET RECORDS LP / CD

'Can I go again?', the debut full-length album by Richmond, VA-based singer-songwriter Benét (Benét Nutall) is a diverse collection of contemplative, tightly-crafted indie-pop, rock, & soul tracks as emotionally resonant as they are immediate & infectious.

CHRISTOPHER TIGNOR
THE ART OF SURRENDER
WESTERN VINYL LP

Unrestrained melodic rapture, & the smallest violin gestures coexist on this bold neoclassical masterpiece. The Guardian calls him "absurdly talented." R.I.Y.L. Explosions in the Sky, Godspeed You Black Emperor, Max Richter.

UNSCHOOLING
NEW WORLD ARTIFACTS
BAD VIBRATIONS RECORDS LP / CD

'New World Artifacts' is the debut album from French five-piece Unschooling. Their energetic lo-fi art-rock may be underscored with subtle pop melodies but is never far from breaking down into chaotic no-wave discord.

MEATRAFFLE
BASE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE
BLANG RECORDS LP / CD

South London ne-er-do-wells Meatraffle make huge strides forward with this third album of funky trumpet-laced street pop combining a caustic wit with a tender heart.

JEFF MOLLER
SIGH BABY
ROYAL OAKIE CD

Jeff Moller's debut mines his background in indie-rock, garage, psych, & country through 10 slacker anthems. Featuring contributions from members of Sugar Candy Mountain, Papercuts, Michael James Tapscott, & more.

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CONTENTS

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NOVEMBER 2023

MOJO at 30

ISSUE 360

"I was trying to find my mojo, y'know. Get it back on track, man."

PAUL WELLER RELIVES *WILD WOOD*, P48

FEATURES

32 DOLLY PARTON How a good ol' gal from East Tennessee became one of America's great songwriters and canonized icons: "I can fit in with the White House or the outhouse!"

38 ROBBIE ROBERTSON The Band's visionary tunesmith and "mathematical" guitarist has left us with some of North America's greatest music and the odd unanswered question.

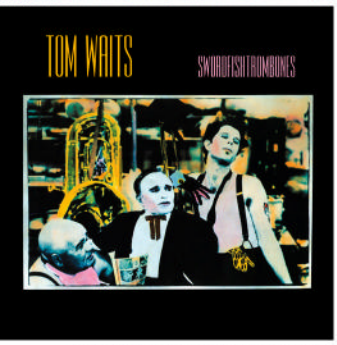
COVER STORY

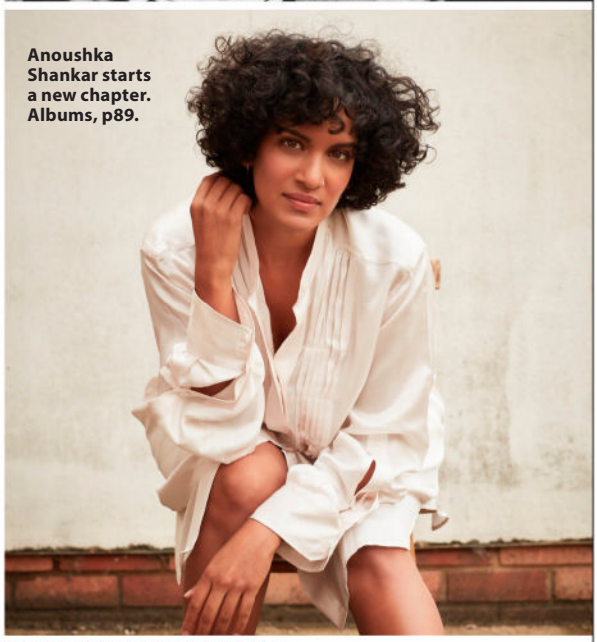
46 COVER STORY: THE BEST MUSIC OF MOJO's LIFETIME We celebrate our 30th birthday with the artists who've made music history since 1993. Dylan, The Beatles, Kate Bush, Paul Weller, Jack White and more – the records that changed their lives… and ours.

76 30 FOR THE NEXT 30 From Shabaka Hutchings to Taylor Swift, Dry Cleaning and Billy Strings – the artists MOJO expects great things from in our next chapter.

Kevin Cummins/Getty

Back to the womb: Nirvana's *In Utero* revisited, p18.





Anoushka Shankar starts a new chapter. Albums, p89.

In the picture: Wilco, Lead Album, p82.

MOJO

REGULARS

9 **ALL BACK TO YOUR PLACE** MOJO is 30? What better time to ask some of our esteemed and long-standing readers what they like, for a change?

114 **REAL GONE** Sixto Rodriguez, Jamie Reid, Erkin Koray, Biff Rose, Randy Meisner, Gary Young… hail and farewell.

120 **ASK MOJO** Which big names co-wrote songs that they both covered?

122 **HELLO GOODBYE** Paul Du Noyer, MOJO's first editor, recalls getting the ball rolling with much cosmic Scouse mysticism.

WHAT GOES ON!

14 **PETE TOWNSHEND** Fifty-two years on from *Who's Next*, a new box set brings it – and its conceptual precursor Life House – back into focus. Pete Townshend speaks about the future, a new movie and 1,000 interviews.

18 **NIRVANA** 1993's *In Utero* is, like MOJO, 30: Krist Novoselic talks about a new edition and what it's like playing those songs live again.

20 **THE BLACK KEYS** Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney are in the studio and they've called on heavy friends including Beck, Alice Cooper and Noel Gallagher.

22 **BERNIE TAUPIN** Having written his memoirs, Elton's partner-in-rhyme tells us about boozing with the Hollywood Vampires and The Wailers' extra-strong weed.

26 **THE PRISONERS** These Hammond organ-toting punk-Mods from the Medway flamed out in the '80s, leaving a mighty echo. But now they're back. Want info? Read on.

MOJO FILTER

82 **NEW ALBUMS** Wilco keep it in the family, plus Sufjan Stevens, Roger Waters, Allison Russell, Jamila Woods and more.

96 **REISSUES** *Who's Next*/Life House revisited, plus Pharoah Sanders, High Tide, The Replacements, Galt MacDermot and more.

108 **BOOKS** Sly Stone's hair-raising memoir, plus ex-Cure drummer Lol Tolhurst's goth history, Thurston Moore's life story and more.

110 **SCREEN** A new documentary about folk legend Joan Baez gets behind the smile.

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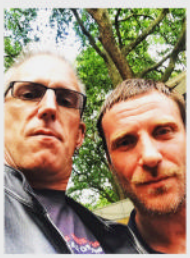
THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...

Matt Turner

"It's been an honour to work on such a great mag," says Matt, who has been MOJO's picture editor for over 20 years. When not on picture duties, he spends his time walking the north Cornwall coast erecting tents for the area's premier glamping company (ysellacornwall.co.uk). He has also started to dress like Ben Fogle.

Simon McEwen

MOJO's production editor Simon has been at the magazine since November 2021. A music mag lifer who started subbing at NME in 1995, he's also worked for Select and Q, the latter for 16 years until it closed in July 2020. Simon's currently immersed in writing next month's How To Buy Adrian Sherwood – a "labour of dub", he says.

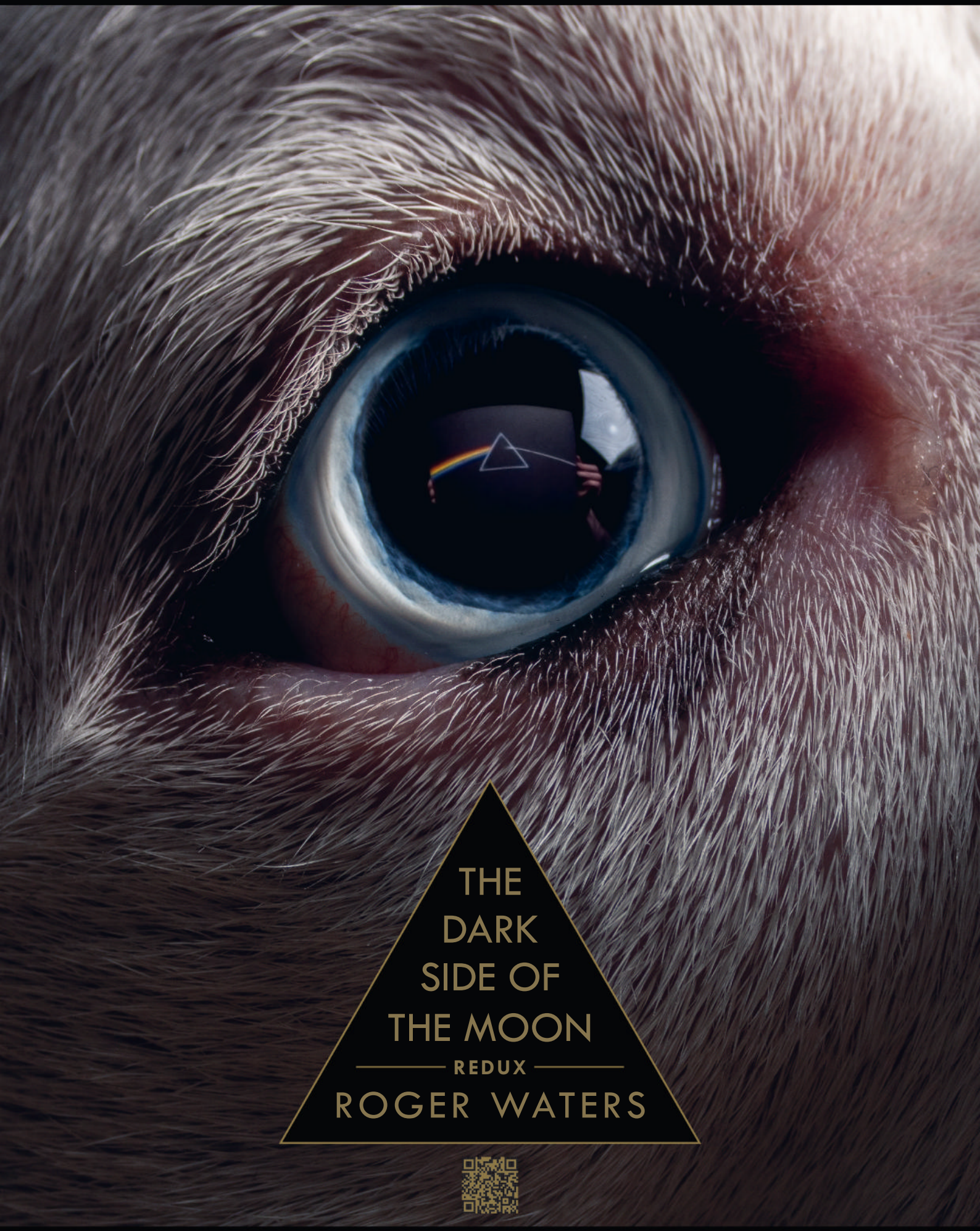


Mark Wagstaff

I bought issue one of MOJO at Liverpool Lime Street Station in 1993. I just thought, "That's *my* magazine!", never dreaming that I'd become Art Editor in 1998. I've worked with some brilliant editors and designers. I've shaken the hands of Paul McCartney, James Brown and Jason Williamson for god's sake! What a job!?

Anton Corbijn, Quinton Winter

HE'S GONE AND DONE IT. HE'S RE-IMAGINED IT. HE MUST BE MAD!



THE NEW ALBUM OUT 06.10.23 - PRE-ORDER NOW AT ROGERWATERS.COM

MOJO

BURIED TREASURES

15 key tracks from the greatest albums you'd never heard

MOJO at 30

1 THE PRISONERS
Deceiving Eye

This sinewy beat club beatdown opens *In From The Cold*, the last album by Medway garage Mods The Prisoners, selected as a Buried Treasure in MOJO 107, back in 2002. This month, though, Graham Day's reassembled band return to our pages (see p26), with news of a fifth album – a mere 37 years after its predecessor.

Written by Graham Day/James Patrick Taylor. ℗1986 Countdown Records under license from Acid Jazz Acquisitions Ltd. From *In From The Cold*

2 ANIMALS THAT SWIM
King Beer

"I understand the appeal of the band you like that no-one else does," Animals That Swim frontman Hank Starrs told MOJO 280, decades after their debut album *Workshy* was released. A shabby-genteel indie masterpiece from the London pub circuit circa 1994.

Written by Hank Starrs, Hugh Barker. Published by BMG Rights Management. ℗&©1994 Elemental Records, a division of One Little Independent Records. From *Workshy* (Elemental Records); https://www.olirecords.com/

3 ORCHESTRA BAOBAB
Werente Serigne

The Dakar dance band Orchestra Baobab formed in 1970, but their music didn't sneak out abroad 'til after they'd split, when the 1989 *Pirates Choice* LP compiled a clutch of 1982 cassettes. A 2001 reunion has subsequently made them Senegalese music ambassadors.

Written by Ndiouga Dieng, Barthélemy Attisso. BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd. ℗2001 World Circuit Limited, a BMG company. Licensed courtesy of BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd. GBBGU0163004. From *Pirates Choice*

4 THE BEAU BRUMMELS
Turn Around

Now seen as a key text in the development of country rock, there was a time when the San Franciscan band's fifth album, *Bradley's Barn*, was something of a buried treasure; a neglected 1968 gem by a pop group way past their commercial zenith, but only just hitting their creative one.

Written by Bob Durand, Ron Elliot. Published by Warner-Tamerlane Music/Wax Tablet Music. ℗1968 WEA International Inc. USWB10201300 Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.

9 DONNIE & JOE EMERSON
Baby

From the mysterious world of self-released private press albums, a vaporous bedroom soul classic from 1979, courtesy of two teenage farmboys from Washington state. The Emersons' story is now a movie, named after that precious debut album, *Dreamin' Wild*.

Written by Donnie Emerson. Published by Lazy Logger (BMI) administered by Modern Works/ Light in the Attic Music Publishing, LLC. Courtesy of Light in the Attic Records & Distribution LLC. From *Dreamin' Wild* (LITA 082) www.LightInTheAttic.net

10 GARY HIGGINS
I Pick Notes From The Sky

The acid-folk boom of the early 2000s helped bring a motley bunch of outsider musicians to a new audience, not least Gary Higgins, who'd quietly released the bewitching, Crosby-esque *Red Hash* on his own Nufusmoon label back in 1973. Shortly after its release, the Connecticut guitarist was imprisoned for two years following a pot bust.

Written by Gary Higgins. Published by Mr Fish Music. Produced by Gary Higgins, Chico Cardillo. ℗&©2005 Drag City Inc. Label: Drag City Records. From *Red Hash*

11 RAM JOHN HOLDER
Pub Crawling Blues

"Looking for a scene?" Try a night out with Ram John Holder, denizen of swinging London in 1969, after a peripatetic life that had taken him from Guyana to the Greenwich Village folk clubs. In the UK, Holder became better known as an actor rather than a musician – notably as Porkpie in '80s/'90s sitcom Desmond's.

Written by Holder. Publisher – Carlin Music Delaware LLC. ISRC Code – GB23E1101144. ℗1969 Cherry Red Records Ltd Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records

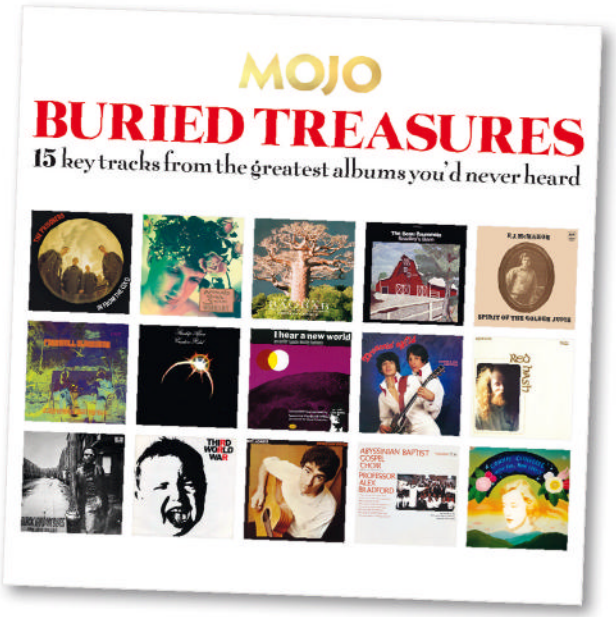
12 THIRD WORLD WAR
Ascension Day

A gnarly countercultural dispatch from turn of the '70s London, in the shape of heavy rock insurrectionists Third World War. This proto-punk call for a workers' revolution comes from their self-titled 1971 debut. Among their auspicious gigs: a benefit show for Oz magazine alongside Arthur Brown, Pink Fairies and Roy Harper.

Written by Terry Stamp/Jim Avery. Producer Jon Fenton for Cockney Coup Productions. Publishing Interworld Music Limited. ℗1971 Onward Music Limited/Fly Records. GBBWX1500187. From *Third World War* box set on Fly Records tbr 2024

FOR 30 YEARS, A KEY PART OF MOJO's MISSION HAS been to uncover brilliant records that, for whatever reason, have been sidelined by history. "Our aim is to cover the best music we know," Paul Du Noyer wrote in the first MOJO editor's letter. "We'll tell some untold stories and make some fresh connections." Soon enough, one way to tell those stories would be in our Buried Treasure slot, where MOJO's writers could eulogise the lost, neglected and bizarre: private press obscurities, cratedigger holy grails, weird marginalia from the great and good, and much more.

Over the years, plenty of those Buried Treasures – by Rodriguez, Karen Dalton, Terry Callier, Skip Spence, Vashti Bunyan – have entered the canon. Others have remained cult concerns, still the preserve of a turned-on few. This month, we've collected 15 songs from 15 albums that have featured as Buried Treasures. There are eerie home recordings, gospel rave-ups, bedroom soul sensations, country rock pioneers, Senegalese nightclub legends, wild psych loners, proto-punk revolutionaries and a couple of inveterate London pub crawlers. A disparate bunch, but all worth rediscovering again and again and again.



5 F.J. McMAHON
The Spirit Of The Golden Juice

Fred McMahon was a military policeman in San Francisco's Summer of Love, spending his off-duty time in the Haight, before being posted to Vietnam. On his return, he made this downer folk classic in the vein of Fred Neil and Tim Hardin. "About two-thirds [of the songs] are what you'd now call post-traumatic stress disorder," he told MOJO 287.

Written by FJ McMahon. Published by Sterling Songs (PRS) courtesy of Anthology Recordings

6 JUDY HENSKE & JERRY YESTER
Snowblind

Another early entry in the Buried Treasure slot, and another dispatch from California 1969. The sole collaboration between folk singer Henske and husband Yester (ex-Lovin' Spoonful) was *Farewell Aldebaran*, a baroque psych fantasia that became a cratedigger holy grail before resurfacing as a deluxe reissue on Omnivore in 2016.

Written by Judy Henske, Jerry Yester. Published by ℗1968 WEA International Inc. USRE10603004. Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.

7 CREATION REBEL
Starship Africa (Section 1)

A synapse-rewiring, sci-fi dub odyssey, *Starship Africa* was built in the late '70s from Soho sessions by Prince Far I's former backing band. The grooves were then radically reshaped by On-U mainman Adrian Sherwood and partner Chris Garland. "Chris is an old hippy," Sherwood told MOJO 289. "He was pushing to get it as trippy as possible."

Written by A. Maxwell. Published by Warp Publishing. ℗&©1980 On-U Sound. From *Starship Africa* (On-U Sound); https://store.on-usound.com/

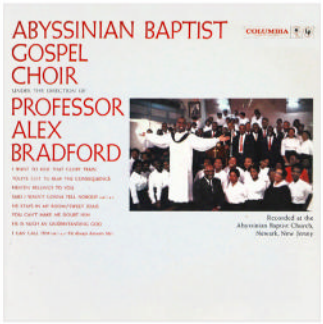
8 JOE MEEK & THE BLUE MEN
Love Dance Of The Saroos

More deep space exotica, courtesy of proto-electropop auteur Joe Meek and unwitting west London skifflers The Blue Men. *I Hear A New World* sat on the shelf from 1959 before being released in 1991 – waiting for a tiki bar to open on Mars?

Written by Duke. Published by Ivy Music Ltd. ISRC Code GBBLY1903890 = The Original Unreleased Album version. ℗2019. ISRC Code GBBLY0603951 = The RPM Restoration version. ℗2006. NB: both are on ACME349BOX. ℗19XX Cherry Red Records Ltd Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records

13 NIC JONES
Farewell To The Gold

"Not bad… quite a good record," was Nic Jones's modest assessment of his fifth album from 1980, *Penguin Eggs*, when he talked to MOJO 304. A British folk classic, though the Fairports-ish Farewell To The Gold is a song about New Zealand gold-diggers, written by Paul Metsers. Tragically, *Penguin Eggs* was Jones's last album: a 1982 car crash effectively ended his career.

Written by Paul Theodore Metsers. ISRC. GB-EEJ-19-00366 P 1980 Topic Records Limited

14 THE ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST GOSPEL CHOIR
I Want To Ride That Glory Train

Before John Hammond discovered Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen, he recorded this extraordinary New Jersey choir at their church in Newark. "Tony Bennett said this is the greatest rock'n'roll record ever recorded," claimed suitably awestruck fan (and MOJO 200's guest editor) Tom Waits in 2004.

Written by A Bradford. Copyright Control First. Released 1960

15 CONNIE CONVERSE
Talkin' Like You

MOJO 324's Buried Treasure told of how some haunting home recordings from the early 1950s became a cult sensation when they were finally released in 2009. Connie Converse was a Greenwich Village margin-dweller who mysteriously disappeared in 1974, leaving behind these songs of uncanny purity akin to Vashti Bunyan.

Written by Elizabeth Eaton Converse. Published by Heroic Cities (BMI) adm. The Musick Group. ℗&©2019 Heroic Cities LLC. From *How Sad, How Lovely* (The Musick Group); http://www.connieconverse.com

THE BEST MUSIC OF MOJO'S LIFETIME
30 STORIES FROM 30 YEARS
STARTS ON PAGE 46

ANIMAL COLLECTIVE

Isn't it Now?

NEW ALBUM · OUT 29th SEPTEMBER

Domino

Helen Lock

FROM KENT TO LOUISIANA

How long have you been reading MOJO?

My first issue of MOJO had **The White Stripes** on the cover [MOJO 106]. I was late discovering them since I moved to the US. I've since subscribed for over 20 years. I've learned so much entertaining trivia from Ask Fred and Ask MOJO.

What music are you currently grooving to?

The Hives' *The Death Of Randy Fitzsimmons*. It's wall-to-wall bangers. I also love a new band from Detroit called **Sugar Tradition**.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Exile On Main St. by **The Rolling Stones**. My second is **The White Stripes**' *Elephant*.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Apache by **The Shadows**, from Bakers Record Shop in Sittingbourne High Street, and it cost 6/8d, which was my birthday money.

Which musician have you ever wanted to be?

I really admire **Tina Turner**. I saw her once at the Albert Hall in 1966, opening for the Stones. She was with the Ike & Tina Turner Revue and I was blown away!

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't, but maybe I should start. Maybe something raucous like the **Faces**?

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Made after 2022 – Jack White's *Fear Of The Dawn*. Before then, it would probably have been the **MC5**'s *Kick Out The Jams*. Both high-energy albums, with some irresistible melodies and rhythms.

And your Sunday morning record?

Led Zeppelin III or **Miles Davis**'s *Sketches Of Spain*. I have eclectic tastes!

Krishna Bhat

SAN FRANCISCO

How long have you been reading MOJO?

Since MOJO 34, which had **Syd Barrett** on the cover. I used to get it from Tower Records. The eclectic mix of articles and new music is what keeps me coming back.

What music are you currently grooving to?

Sinéad O'Connor, **Sigur Rós**, and I don't know if you can groove to **Lankum**, but I've been enjoying their new record a lot.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Joy Division's *Closer*. I get a feeling of getting deeper into my soul. To me it's uplifting.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I think I bought The Funky Gibbon by **The Goodies** when I was about eight years old. I'm not ashamed! But I particularly remember, in Gillingham where I grew up, buying **Squeeze**'s Up The Junction on 7-inch lilac vinyl. It's still one of my favourite ever songs.

Which musician have you ever wanted to be?

David Bowie. He was like the Picasso of music. I could have probably done without the cocaine days though.

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't shower, I bath. I don't sing, but I have been told I have a very good whistle – at the moment it's In Hell I'll Be In Good Company by **The Dead South**.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

New wave, punk stuff – **Stiff Little Fingers**, **Buzzcocks**, **The Undertones**, the **Skids**. They still get me in the mood.

And your Sunday morning record?

The first three **Leonard Cohen** albums. And I do love the first **Velvet Underground** album.

MOJO at 30

ALL BACK TO YOUR PLACE

MOJO READERS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Adie Turner

EPPING, ESSEX

How long have you been reading MOJO?

I bought issue Number 1, so I was in on the ground floor! I was one of the first subscribers so I got a T-shirt which is still in quite decent nick. I do still wear it!

What music are you currently grooving to?

I went to see **Thus Love** at the 100 Club last night and they were tremendous. Their album *Memorial* is fantastic.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Today, it's *Hunky Dory*. On a different **David Bowie** day it could be *Station To Station*.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Wig-Wam Bam by **The Sweet**, from Bayes Recordium in King's Lynn. My mum forced me to listen to it in the listening booth first to make sure it was the record I wanted.

Which musician have you ever wanted to be?

Todd Rundgren. Just that ability to pick up or sit down at any instrument and get magic out of it. He can do anything – and has.

What do you sing in the shower?

The theme to a 1972 film called Smile Before Death, an Italian giallo film by Silvio Amadio, sung by **Edda Dell'Orso**.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

If I Can't Have You by **Yvonne Elliman**. And you can't go wrong with **Prince**, probably Diamonds And Pearls.

And your Sunday morning record?

Me and my wife often watch Italian exploitation films, so we tend to listen to the soundtracks from them. Last Sunday we listened to an **Ennio Morricone** compilation album called *Crime And Dissonance*.

Ray Leary

SOMERSET

How long have you been reading MOJO?

Number 2 was the first issue I bought, and I've been subscribing since Number 3. I still have all of my issues!

What music are you currently grooving to?

It's by one of the members of **Wet Tuna**. I read the review in MOJO and bought it. It's **Matt Valentine** and his partner, **MV & EE**.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Steal Your Face by **Grateful Dead**. It's their worst-produced album ever, but the songs just shine through somehow, the magic is there.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Those Were The Days by **Mary Hopkin**, from a record shop on the Earls Court Road. They sold me the **Sandie Shaw** version, and it took a six-year-old tantrum for them to change it.

> "I used to play Grateful Dead before I went to school."
>
> RAY LEARY

Which musician have you ever wanted to be?

Rory Gallagher. He could start a party in an empty room.

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't purposefully go in to sing. The last one was probably off the advert from Webuyanycar.com.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Space Ritual by **Hawkwind**. For all the fun and memories. They were the local band where I lived in west London and we used to go and see them for free. It was like our Haight-Ashbury.

And your Sunday morning record?

Workingman's Dead by **Grateful Dead**. I used to play that before I went to school. That would set me up for the day. It's not too loud and it wouldn't upset my parents.

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WELCOME, EVERYONE, TO OUR 30TH anniversary issue of MOJO. It's humbling, as we call up old friends and plan the festivities, to be reminded how much our magazine means to so many of you. Jack White remembers saying to Meg White, "Wouldn't it be amazing if we could get on the cover of MOJO?" Kamasi Washington and John Grant tell us about the validation brought by winning MOJO's Album Of The Year. Readers all over the world – hello, Alan Mannings and Chris Jackson in Australia! – sent pictures of their entire collections of MOJOs, from issue 1.

Such love encouraged us to indulge ourselves a little this month. Hence MOJO 360 contains a star-studded trawl through our musical highlights of the past 30 years, and a speculative punt at the artists who'll sustain us for the next 30. We've ranked our best CDs, caught up with our first Editor, Paul Du Noyer, and revisited some design cues from MOJO 1 and our first Art Director, Andy Cowles. We've also compiled some of our favourite Buried Treasures for this month's CD – and the good news is that all our future CDs will be available worldwide again, wherever you buy MOJO.

In a changing world, and a radically transforming musical landscape, we hope we've provided some consolation and stability these past three decades. Incredible music continues to be made, and we'll be here to celebrate it as long as you are. Thanks again for everything.

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

The music took us to some strange places… physically, spiritually, psychotically

I greatly appreciated MOJO 359's piece on The Smiths. However, I felt the piece overlooked what was a key component of The Smiths' charm: lyrically, and musically their legacy is surely not just 'men out of place'. The gender ambiguity/flexibility in the likes of Girl Afraid, This Night Has Opened My Eyes, Sheila Take A Bow etc, combined with their feminist literary influence – Shakespeare's Sister (from Virginia Woolf) – was a critical part of the band. Therefore, the list of bands influenced by The Smiths – Radiohead, Oasis and Suede – was disappointing in its all-male line-up. The first names that come to mind regarding Smiths-influenced '90s indie bands are surely The Sundays and The Cranberries… right? Anyway, great piece, great CD, great issue.

Rupert Ahmed Payne

…Thank you for your article on The Smiths. I've been a huge fan ever since I bought *Hatful Of Hollow* from Lidl two years ago when I was 15. I particularly enjoyed reading about the recording of How Soon Is Now?; I have always loved this song due to its departure from The Smiths' usual sound. I recently attended one of Morrissey's concerts in Dublin and listening to How Soon Is Now? live was incredible.

Maria Sherry, Belfast

It was right in the middle of that whole psychedelia

Thanks for the insightful article about Bridget St John [MOJO 359]. In the '70s I saw her play several gigs and also saw Nick Drake do similar, and I've often bored on about their similar vocal ranges and guitar skills, so it's heartening to now read MOJO's comparison. My Bridget highlight goes back to 1971. A mate booked her for a gig at a club in Scarborough and we spent a very relaxed afternoon with Bridget. I still treasure the gig ticket. Above her autograph, she wrote, "For the sun in everything". I'm looking forward to further LPs and a bonus if I ever see her play another gig.

Dave Burrows, Manchester

➢

What's it called? Rock'n'roll.

Reading Gordon Barclay's letter [MOJO 359] took me back to the outraged rantings in the letters pages of Melody Maker circa 1977-79 during the long-gone punk rock wars; complaining about those "punk rockers and new wave groups" and their awful music. It filled me with a warm glow of nostalgia. So Lydon and Siouxsie are "untalented"? Many unique musicians who worked with both bands, including Keith Levene, Ginger Baker, Jah Wobble, John McGeoch, Budgie and Robert Smith, would probably beg to differ. Both artists have made great records. *Metal Box* may be a challenging album, but its sheer groundbreaking chutzpah and inventiveness (throwing Beefheart, Can, dub and whatever else into the mix but still sounding like no-one else) would put most artists to shame. And whatever you may think of Lydon, the terms Barclay used to describe a grieving man are a bit, well, shitty.

Ed Neil, Galston, Ayrshire

…MOJO has quality standards, and whilst Lydon and Siouxsie may not be to Gordon Barclay's taste (or necessarily mine), they do at least qualify as meaningful subjects to feature. Not so some of Barclay's suggestions: should you ever deign to put Gerry Rafferty or Billy Joel on your cover, then I'll know you've lost the plot and may need to review my subscription.

James Twist, via e-mail

…I've been reading your wonderful publication since 1993, but I must protest at MOJO 358. Siouxsie Sioux on the cover? Even a small article about her could hardly be defended. As far as I'm concerned, anyone who has at any point worn a swastika on any part of their body, ceases to be in the club. Both of my great-grandfathers died stopping people who wore that symbol. Very disappointed, chaps.

James Rust, Bromley

We wanted it to be a celebration

Thank you for your great remembrance in MOJO 358 of one of the top five concerts I ever saw, Queen opening for Mott The Hoople on Broadway. I attended the second night (May 8, 1974). After Queen's great set, the Uris Theater had magicians and circus acts perform in the lobby while they switched the equipment. Mott's set was nothing short of spectacular. I was one of the referenced kids with my elbows on the stage, and the guy next to me gave Grosvenor a top hat which he put on and later wore on the cover of Mott's *Live* LP.

Joe Paslawski, Washington, New Jersey

You know what happens when you have too much fun

I have been an enthusiastic subscriber for years, and I have a question that's been nagging me for some time: where's the big piece on Supertramp? Forty years ago Roger Hodgson left the band – and five minutes later the others realised, ouch, the hits were all his. Neither side has really made it without the other, yet they never got back together. A great drama, a great story of wounded egos, fed with bittersweet melodies and the odd saxophone. Screams to be in MOJO, doesn't it?

Max Fellmann, via e-mail

Do you want me to plug that in there?

Being a massive fan of The Go-Betweens, I was excited to see your fine review of the new SnarskiCircusLindy-Band EP, featuring the inimitable Lindy Morrison [MOJO 356]. I will admit, my heart sank a little when I saw bassist Dan Kelly was listed only as "nephew of Paul". Dan's involvement with his uncle, Paul Kelly, is certainly one of the highlights of his career but the four LPs, EPs and singles under his own name, from 2002 to 2015, are among the greatest I have in my collection. If you like twee Kinksy pop, raunchy Pavement-esque rock, Beatles-ish invention, Beach Boys-influenced ballads, 10cc-esque pop, and slow-building jams that grow to orgasmic proportions, you can't go wrong with Dan!

Peter Jesperson, Los Angeles

The object is to keep your balls on the table and knock everybody else's off

I'm so sick that every time Tony Visconti is interviewed about Marc Bolan [MOJO 359], he never fails to put him down and belittle him. He would have been nothing without Marc and T. Rex. In the latest MOJO he says Marc only knew seven chords and was limited, and that his albums after *Electric Warrior* sound the same, which is utter bullshit. It's time Marc's fans stood up to Visconti and told him where to go.

Martin Kelly, via e-mail

There's the view that jazz is evil because it comes from evil people

Interesting review of the first four LPs John Martyn was involved with [MOJO 359]. Not much about the often wonderful music, mainly tut-tutting about Martyn's well documented and regrettable bad behaviour. How many other great dead musicians have destroyed themselves with drugs and booze? It's a sad truth that great artists are often not nice people away from the public eye. Perhaps Martyn and the writer had words in the past? And perhaps Martyn comes in for this kind of attack these days simply because of the transcendent, groundbreaking music this troubled soul created. Songs like Tree Green, Solid Air, The River, Head And Heart maybe reveal the man he wanted, but manifestly failed, to be. The dramatic disconnect indicating some level of self-awareness, even self-disgust, can fuel disappointment, as evidenced by reviews such as this.

Alastair Dougall, West Sussex

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Who's Next | Life House

Pete Townshend foresaw the invention of the internet, virtual reality and pandemic-style lockdown on *Life House*. With the Super Deluxe Edition of *Who's Next* | *Life House*, listeners will hear Pete's *Life House* demos, The Who's studio and live recordings, and how the concept folded into *Who's Next*, widely regarded as one of The Who's greatest albums.

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WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET MOJO

Life House Everlasting

Finally, The Who's legendary, abandoned 1971 concept piece is built! Townshend explains all.

IT'S THE HOTTEST day of 2023 so far and Pete Townshend is sat in the study of his Oxfordshire home, wearing a woolly stevedore's hat. MOJO gets the sense that he's decompressing after the recent The Who Hits Back! world tour. But Townshend is here to discuss Life House, the abandoned concept album/story/movie behind The Who's 1971 LP, *Who's Next*. Both are commemorated in a 50th anniversary box set, which, in contrary Who fashion, has arrived two years late to its own party.

The thoughts of Chairman Pete will always have an outlet via Life House. "There's a documentary being made about it," he divulges, "and the researcher has found – wait for it, because I know I exaggerate – one *thousand* interviews I've done about Life House."

Life House was written about a polluted world sometime in the future. The repressed population were joined together by virtual reality-style suits, plugged into a central, computerised system, 'The Grid', which serviced them with ready-made life experiences and entertainment. Changes in society, technology and the planet continue to highlight aspects of the story. When Townshend oversaw a previous box set, 2000's *Lifehouse Chronicles*, the music industry was still grappling with the Grid/internet.

"Websites were being built, but the feeling in the business was that it may not take off," recalls Townshend. The Who's vocalist, Roger Daltrey, certainly wasn't a fan. "I remember Roger saying that he felt the internet was

The kids' toys are alright: Pete Townshend with his dog Towser and friends, Twickenham, 1971 – "I was pretty exhausted by it all at the time."

Barrie Wentzell

inherently evil. My wife [musician/composer] Rachel [Fuller] was doing [a webcast] In The Attic, and Roger was very much against it. Not in a nasty way, but he wasn't interested."

Townshend, however, has always been fascinated by what's now called 'multi-media', going back to his days as a student at Ealing art school. "Right from the beginning I had this intuitive thought," he says, "through studying with [cybernetic artist and Ealing lecturer] Roy Ascott, who was a visionary in his own right."

In 1970, Townshend secured a $2 million budget for Life House the movie. But the idea was scrapped, and director Ken Russell made a film of The Who's 1969 rock opera Tommy instead. The *Who's Next/Life House* box contains a graphic novel based on Townshend's original film script and another written some years later for a second proposed movie with directors Alan Parker and Nic Roeg.

"Alan had just done [Pink Floyd's 1982 film] The Wall, and said Life House was unworkable," recalls Townshend. "I despaired at the time, but the comic takes the best of both stories.

"I always felt that my wackiest ideas could only find financial fruition if I got the plot across," he explains. "So I started working with people who did storyboarding. When we were doing this new box set I realised this is the best way to describe, to tell, to introduce a music project that has a story and a theme."

Trying to get others to understand Life House – including the rest of The Who – ➢

"One *thousand* interviews I've done about Life House…"
PETE TOWNSHEND

Life goes on…: (clockwise from top) The Who (from left) Roger Daltrey, Pete Townshend, Keith Moon and John Entwistle get expressive in 1971; Townshend getting airborne on-stage with The Who in '71; Pete with guitar: "aspects of Life House may be contentious for modern people…"

Getty (2), Trinifold Archive

➤ has always been problematic, however. In his memoir, Who I Am, Townshend compared the process to "trying to explain atomic energy to a caveman." The Who even titled their 2006 comeback album, *Endless Wire*, after the time Daltrey told Townshend there wasn't enough wire in the world for them to film Life House as its author intended.

"I wasn't being unkind," he stresses. "Roger is a practical man, and he had read the original script, where the whole of London was covered in wire. He said, 'You know, it's going to be very difficult to make that happen.' And he was right. There was no CGI back then. It was a sensible caution."

The real core of the problem, though, was the ongoing battle between art and commerce. The Who's managers, Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp, thought *Tommy* would make a better film, and the record company preferred a straightforward album.

The Life House album and movie were never made, but parts of the story appeared on 1971's *Who's Next* and in later Who and Townshend solo works. "I was pretty exhausted by it all at the time," he recalls, "and I felt I'd lost the project so I handed *Who's Next* over to [producer] Glyn Johns."

In 1971, Townshend's devotion to an Indian spiritual master, Meher Baba, inspired some of these songs. "There are aspects of Life House, particularly in the comic, which may be contentious for modern people," he says. "The idea of karma and spiritual growth. I would say most of Gen Z may feel they have a spiritual component but usually it's about (*puts on a softer voice*) 'Mindfulness' or 'Be Kind'. It's not about, why is the human species like it is? What's the payoff for a child murdered by Lucy Letby?

"I think it's going to be difficult for young people who might be interested in the comic to take that on," he continues. "We are in a different world now. Conversations about spirituality tend to be about trying to deliver yourself and the people around you with a better life and a better planet."

"I like to work with a concept… not because I'm into wank-off rock operas!"
PETE TOWNSHEND

Presciently, the polluted planet of Life House seems more relevant now than it was then. "Pollution was out of control in the '70s," insists Townshend. "Governments and newspapers suppressed most of the big stories because it was so horrific. A lot of people of my kids' generation, who would have been nine or 10 or 11 then, have got lead poisoning in the cleft of their brains. They've got heavy metals and lead stuck in there for life. No, it hasn't been medically proven. But there are quite a few cod-scientific writers making these claims. All I am doing is going back and explaining it."

Despite the failed movie projects and the compromise involved with *Who's Next*, Life House signposted the ideal way for Townshend to work. "As a songwriter, all I need is inspiration, but I need organisation as well," he admits. "So this is why I like to work with a concept. It's not because I'm into wank-off rock operas! It just allows me to focus and stretch out."

PERVERSELY, LIFE HOUSE ENABLED Townshend to take The Who's music into stadiums. His audience didn't always grasp the concept, but they got off on the power of Won't Get Fooled Again and Baba O'Riley. "I know people can't imagine anyone resisting the opportunity to play in a football stadium but it was anathema to me for a while," says Townshend. "Then, when The Who broke up [temporarily in 1983], Queen, U2 and the Stones just *walked* into stadiums, as if that was how it's always been." He pauses, sounding a little aggrieved. "The best way to see The Rolling Stones is in a club – no question. But the songs Glyn put together on *Who's Next* – Won't Get Fooled Again, Behind Blue Eyes and Baba O'Riley – gave us this hub of music that created a stadium machinery that works."

The machinery is still functioning, as demonstrated on The Who Hits Back!, when the group performed many of these songs with a full orchestra. The only part of Life House Townshend can't abide seems to be the photograph on the cover of *Who's Next*. What's wrong with four west London herberts urinating on a pile of concrete? "I fucking hate it!" he cries. Why? "I just don't like it."

In the meantime, 52 years on, Life House shows no sign of going away. "Because of the graphic novel, there's immediately been interest in a movie again," reveals Townshend. "I don't know what kind of movie it will be, only that The Who won't be in it."

A box set, a graphic novel, an upcoming documentary and a possible movie? There can't be any more Life House left, can there? "There bloody well can," he laughs. "I keep coming back to it because it's such fun."

Mark Blake

Who's Next/Life House is released as a Super Deluxe Edition on UMR on September 15. *Turn to page 96 for a full review.*

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Out of the garage: Nirvana rev up *In Utero* (from left) Kurt Cobain, Krist Novoselic, Dave Grohl, July 3, 1993; (inset) playing with the angels.

KRIST NOVOSELIC CRACKS OPEN THE NEW NIRVANA BOX SET

ON SEPTEMBER 21, 1991, Nirvana began their *Nevermind* North American tour at Toronto Opera House. The venue capacity was 980 and the band had a road crew of three. Two years and many million album sales later, the *In Utero* North American tour opened at Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix, to an audience of 15,000 and with the off-stage team now numbering 17. Kurt Cobain, Dave Grohl and Krist Novoselic had on-stage company too: Pat Smear, formerly of LA punk legends the Germs, was now full-time touring guitarist, plus cellist Lori Goldston. Meanwhile, amid fake trees and the state-of-the-art lightshow stood two life-size anatomical models with angel wings, like a pair of dream sentinels.

"We were trying to be professional," Novoselic recalls. "So we put on a show for people: an acoustic section, an amazing stage set. It was all about being a world class band."

The 1993/94 *In Utero* tours of North America and Europe saw Nirvana – hitherto an occasionally erratic live act – accept the challenge of playing massive arenas and delivering consistency on a nightly basis across four months. Proof of how successful they were emerges in a significant new live document: two entire shows from late 1993 and early 1994, the latter in their home city of Seattle, are being released on a 30th anniversary edition of *In Utero*, the final Nirvana album. These unheard soundboard digital recordings, "source separated and reconstructed" by producer Jack Endino, attest to both the band's ensemble power and Cobain's uncanny ability to transmute inner pain into cathartic performance.

"The shows rock," says Novoselic. "They need to be heard. Now with the AI, you can take a stereo mix and then break it down into a multitrack. So you can get really good mixes. They sound raw. And you get Kurt up there who's just carrying the show. Amazing."

That same combination of pure artistic instinct and work ethic defined the original album itself, which is now remastered by Bob Weston, engineer Steve Albini's assistant during the 12-day recording session in February 1993. Various deluxe box formats offer ancillary baubles like replica backstage passes, a 3-D mobile of the cover art's angel, and a removable acrylic panel of said art complete with display stand. "You know, people love that tactile stuff," Novoselic chuckles. "It's like reading MOJO, right? With your fingers on the page."

The bassist professes amazement that Nirvana remain "as strong as ever, if not stronger", but knows the reason for the band's enduring cultural presence isn't anniversary reissues or Urban Outfitters T-shirts. "It's Kurt – he had this charisma, this intensity that was, and still is, compelling to people. And then he had the knack for melody. Something came from deep inside."

Novoselic laughs when MOJO suggests the possibility of an ABBA Voyage-esque 'Nirvanatar' show – "You never know! I'll say 'no way', then it's like, '*How much??* When do we start?!'" – but looks forward to further reunions with Grohl, Smear and guest vocalists, as first occasioned in 2012 with Paul McCartney filling Kurt Cobain's shoes.

"I'm always hoping for that," he says. "There was a time where I thought I'd never play those songs again. We had a conversation – 'Let's do it, but not overdo it.' So yeah, when it's the right moment."

Keith Cameron

> **"People love tactile stuff. Like reading MOJO, right?"**
> **KRIST NOVOSELIC**

GIMME FIVE... 'DON'T' SONGS

Marcia Griffiths
Don't Let Me Down
(HARRY J, 1969)

The future I-Three covers the Beatles and Billy Preston hit, with conviction, in reggae style. Oddly, some copies give a composer's credit to producer Harry J, who did a groovy instrumental organ version with his All-Stars band.

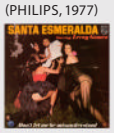
Weird Al Yankovic
Don't Download This Song
(VOLCANO, 2006)

Where the satirist takes on illegal downloading of MP3s in a We Are The World-style gloopathon, wondering if it's a gateway to serious crime and jail time. Given away as a free MP3, obviously.

Ella Fitzgerald
Don't Let That Doorknob Hit You
(CAPITOL, 1968)

From 1968's odd-but-fun country-into-jazz covers set *Misty Blue*, Ella realises that her no-good, useless man has been playing around all over town, and gives him his walking papers. See also Norma Jean's original.

Santa Esmeralda Starring Leroy Gomez
Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood
(PHILIPS, 1977)



Disco version of the song first sung by Nina Simone and covered by The Animals, Costello and Klaus Wunderlich, who included it in a medley with Yes Sir I Can Boogie by Baccara.

The Cramps
Don't Eat Stuff Off The Sidewalk
(IRS, 1981)

Prowling rock'n'roll with some good advice from Lux and Ivy. Don't eat out of bins either, they advise. Disgusting, but you knew that. Ideally twinned with Doris Day's 1960 comedy film-theme Please Don't Eat The Daisies.

Anton Corbijn, Kelly A. Swift

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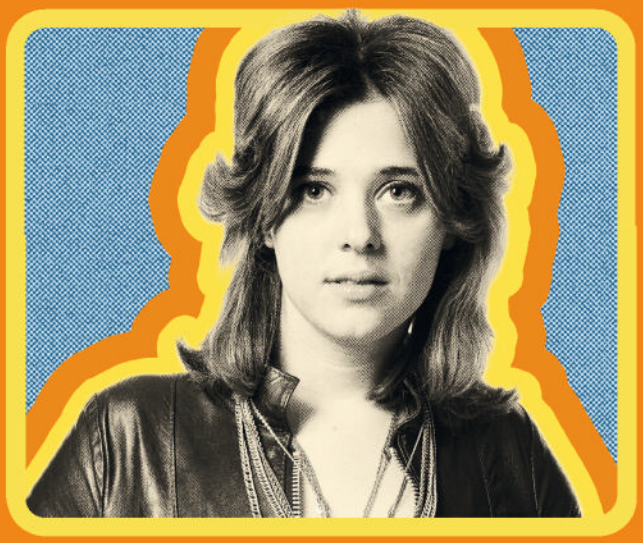

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Thu	16	Wolverhampton The Civic at The Halls
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05	leeds first direct arena	19	bristol beacon
06	edinburgh usher hall	20	oxford new theatre
08	glasgow royal concert hall	22	portsmouth guildhall
09	newcastle o2 city hall	23	ipswich regent theatre
10	sheffield city hall	24	london the o2
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WED	11	GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL
SOLD OUT	13	YORK BARBICAN
SOLD OUT	14	SAGE GATESHEAD
SUN	15	SALFORD THE LOWRY
MON	16	SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
SOLD OUT	18	LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
THU	19	CROYDON FAIRFIELD HALL
SOLD OUT	20	PORTSMOUTH KINGS THEATRE
SAT	21	CARDIFF ST. DAVID'S HALL
MON	23	GUILDFORD G LIVE
SOLD OUT	24	BRIGHTON DOME
SOLD OUT	26	BATH THE FORUM
SOLD OUT	27	BOURNEMOUTH PAVILION THEATRE
SAT	28	OXFORD NEW THEATRE
MON	30	SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION
TUE	31	READING THE HEXAGON

NOVEMBER 2023

WED	01	CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
SOLD OUT	03	IPSWICH REGENT THEATRE
SAT	04	LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO HAMMERSMITH

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SOLD OUT	1/4 GLASGOW / BARROWLAND
SOLD OUT	2/4 BRISTOL / O2 ACADEMY
FINAL TICKETS	3/4 BRIGHTON / DOME
SOLD OUT	5/4 CARDIFF / GREAT HALL
SOLD OUT	6/4 MANCHESTER / ACADEMY
FINAL TICKETS	8/4 DUBLIN / 3OLYMPIA THEATRE
SOLD OUT	10/4 NORWICH / UEA
FINAL TICKETS	13/4 LONDON / EVENTIM APOLLO

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> "We have the only album that has both Noel Gallagher and Alice Cooper on it."
> **PATRICK CARNEY**

Unlocking the doors: (main) Black Keys' guitarist Dan Auerbach with bandmate Patrick Carney and Beck at Sunset Sound, LA; (top) Noel Gallagher joins Dan and Patrick at London's Toe Rag, January 2023.

FACT SHEET
Title: tbc
Due: March 2024
Songs: This Is Nowhere/Stay In Your Grave/Everybody's On The Game
The Buzz: Dan Auerbach: "The collaboration was in the songwriting, mostly. Pat and I were the ones producing and recording the music, so at the end of the day everything sounds cohesive, and like us."

THE BLACK KEYS READY STAR-STUDDED "PARTY RECORD"

AFTER SOMETHING of a transitional decade following the worldwide success of 2010's *Brothers* and '11's *El Camino*, The Black Keys are on something of a roll at the moment, preparing to drop their third album in as many years, likely to be a 20-track double-LP – which the duo are variously calling "our Saturday-night party record", and "our best".

In the wake of 2021's tribute to hill country blues *Delta Kream*, and last year's lockdown pressure release *Dropout Boogie*, singer/guitarist Dan Auerbach and drummer Patrick Carney decided to keep recording. To freshen things up, they called Beck with a view to finessing a collaboration first discussed 20 years ago, when he took the duo as his support act on an arena tour.

"He came down to Dan's studio in Nashville, Easy Eye," says Carney. "We wrote and recorded with him for three or four days, and it was very productive. After that, the idea of collaborating with other musicians became the focus." One song they completed at the first session, This Is Nowhere, Carney describes as "a '90s indie rock epic with a complete earworm of a chorus".

They also hooked up with Beck's keyboard player on that 2003 tour, Greg Kurstin, now the super-producer behind hits by Adele, Sia and Liam Gallagher. "We'd never written with a keyboard player before, but Greg is able to get the nastiest synth sounds ever. His whole studio in LA is a leviathan of cables, so he can make all kinds of crazy-ass sounds," says Auerbach. "Every time we collaborated with someone, it took us some place we hadn't expected to go, but we were ready. We were prepared to go anywhere."

Still in LA, several tunes were cut with hip-hop producer Dan The Automator, who Carney looked up after his young son became obsessed with Gorillaz' Automator-produced debut. Beck also joined those sessions, appearing on 10 or more tracks in total.

Perhaps the most unlikely team-up was with Noel Gallagher, who rarely collaborates but gamely spent four days in January co-writing three tracks at east London's vintage garage-rock mecca Toe Rag, one pungently entitled Everyone's On The Game. "The title was just something Noel said," says Auerbach. "It doesn't have the same connotation Stateside, so it's almost like we made it extra special for our English fans. It feels like such a big song."

The show-stealer, however, may turn out to be Stay In Your Grave, co-authored with Reigning Sound's Greg Cartwright and featuring an unforgettable turn from Alice Cooper. "The song has a devil character in it and Patrick had been playing golf with Alice Cooper, so I was like, You should get Alice to come in and play the devil for us!" says Auerbach.

"We have the only album that has both Noel Gallagher and Alice Cooper on it," adds Carney with audible pride.

As-yet untitled, the twelfth Black Keys album was assembled in between touring, the release of an LP by Auerbach's side-project The Arcs, and hosting 'record hangs' in various cities around the world where they aired their favourite 7-inches in small clubs – socialising, getting inspired and raving the night away. The spirit of those parties infused the album's DNA. "That's been the fun of it," concludes Auerbach. "Letting go a little bit."

Andrew Perry

ALSO WORKING

…**PEARL JAM** bassist **Jeff Ament** (right) told WFPK's Kyle Meredith the band's new record should be out next year. "We've sort of earned the right to do whatever the fuck we want to," he mused. "Why wouldn't we go all the way with that?" … **Nancy Wilson** told WBAB radio that she's working on new **HEART** music with her sister Ann: she described it as being "closer to what you would have heard us originally do in the late '70s" …**BLACK GRAPE**, AKA **Shaun Ryder** and **Kermit**, release their fourth album *Orange Head* in November, six years after comeback LP *Pop Voodoo*: songs include Pimp Wars, Liquid Sunshine and Self Harm …**Dave Brock** tells MOJO the next **HAWKWIND** album will be released in March 2024. "It's based on travelling in time – sideways through time," he says. "In one song they go off in a spaceship to a different planet called Heaven." He adds that he and keyboardist Thighpaulsandra have made a separate LP of "weird electronics and spacey sounds" …**BEN FOLDS** told NPR that he doesn't foresee making any more new albums but might release recordings of his musicals, explaining, "I'm not trying to be relevant" …the **RZA** (below) recently told Rolling Stone about the likelihood of a new **WU-TANG CLAN** LP: "We're still here on the Earth… sharing music with each other," he said. "There were a couple of [tracks] I heard that sound like it's very possible" …**DUA LIPA** suggested to the New York Times that her next album will feature "'70s" psychedelia, with production assistance from **Tame Impala**'s **Kevin Parker**…

Larry Niehaus, Getty (2)

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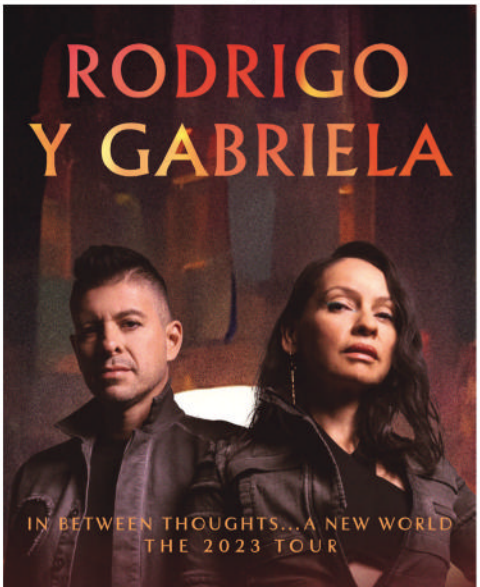

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Still standing: Bernie Taupin and Elton John, 1971.

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2 **Merle Haggard** *I'm Always On A Mountain When I Fall* (FROM *I'M ALWAYS ON A MOUNTAIN WHEN I FALL*, MCA, 1978)

3 **John Coltrane** *My Favorite Things* (FROM *MY FAVORITE THINGS*, ATLANTIC, 1961)

4 **Duke Ellington** *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* (FROM *ELLINGTON AT NEWPORT*, COLUMBIA, 1956)

5 **Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers** *American Girl* (FROM *TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS*, SHELTER, 1976)

Bernie Taupin

The songwriter on his memoir, getting stoned with Lennon and Marley, and a new record with Elton.

IT'S 56 YEARS since nascent lyricist Bernie Taupin and budding songwriter Reg Dwight were first match-made by Ray Williams, an A&R man at Liberty Records, a compositional pairing that powered Dwight's transformation into Elton John. Now, at the age of 73, Taupin has written his memoir, Scattershot: Life, Music, Elton And Me, which follows in the wake of John's own 2019 autobiography, Me. "I loved his assessment of how we met… he got it," Taupin says of his partner's book, talking to MOJO from his Californian home. "I found it extremely funny too. So I was very impressed with it, in the same way as I'm gratified that he was impressed with mine."

The book opens with you in 1967 as a 17-year-old from rural Lincolnshire, at DJM Studios in London, meeting Reg Dwight for the first time. Is it still a vivid scenario for you because of your teenage awkwardness?

Getty

Well, there's no doubt about that. I was completely a fish out of water. I was regarded by so many people at that time as a yokel. I was very uncomfortable. I was socially inept. But I definitely wasn't dumb. Elton saw the best of me and protected me, while others tended to possibly make fun of me a little.

The lyric for Your Song was written in 10 minutes and became something that, as you put it, went on to "traverse decades". Can you wrap your head around that?

Not really (*laughs*). I remember it just falling out onto the page. It was very reflective of who I was at the time. There were so many things that I hadn't experienced. And I think, ultimately, underneath I was a hardcore romantic. It was just sort of a romantic reminiscence and it seems to have resonated with people over the decades.

Your '70s Los Angeles drinking partners the Hollywood Vampires – who was the most entertaining and who was the most dangerous?

Well, Alice [Cooper] has always been my soulmate. Who was the most dangerous? Well, I suppose everybody would gravitate to Keith Moon. But at the same time, Keith had two sides to him. He could charm the devil out of hell. He could be talking to you about Dickens and Warhol, and the next minute he would be putting nitroglycerin in your microwave. But I don't think any of them were that dangerous. Harry Nilsson could be a bit overbearing when he was under the influence. The interesting thing is that they were all really intelligent people who acted like 10-year-olds for a period of time.

In '75 in LA, you and John Lennon got ludicrously stoned with Bob Marley and The Wailers…

But we did not smoke. We just got contact high. It was a night at the Roxy when John and I went to see Bob Marley, which was an absolutely extraordinary performance. We had repaired to On The Rox, the club above the Roxy, post show. We were just minding our own business when the entire Bob Marley clan completely engulfed us. They were incredibly cool. They didn't want to make it seem that they were impressed, but it was John Lennon.

Marley reaches in his bag and brings out a spliff the size of a baby's arm. That was the calling card for everybody else to spark up. Within five minutes, it was like a pea soup fog, you couldn't see anything. And it was so incredibly pungent, that both John and I got completely stoned without even imbibing. We were just nailed to the couch. I don't remember the conclusion. All I remember was waking up the next morning and at some point calling John and saying, "What the fuck happened?!"

How do you feel about Elton's retirement from touring? Has it been emotional for you to watch his final shows?

The last show I saw of Elton's would have been Dodger Stadium [in November 2022]. Was it emotional? It was and it wasn't. I just accepted it. There's still so much he can do. Hopefully, we're going to be making a record soon.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

Back in the late '60s, Elton and I used to frequent a record store in Soho called Musicland. There would be a lot of really interesting characters that we met in that place. There was one guy that would come in all the time. Very lanky and kinetic and kind of crazy. Sort of bug-eyed. He would talk a mile a minute… probably high on speed. Years later, I found out it was Guy Stevens, the A&R guy from Island. I remember him one day bringing in this acetate of this band Mott The Hoople. And obviously he was the guy that discovered them, produced them, and then later on went on to produce The Clash. But he was incredibly knowledgeable about music. He was also very encouraging to us, and we liked him, but we thought he was kind of weird.

Tom Doyle

Scattershot: Life, Music, Elton And Me is out now on Octopus.

"Keith Moon would be putting nitroglycerin in your microwave."
BERNIE TAUPIN

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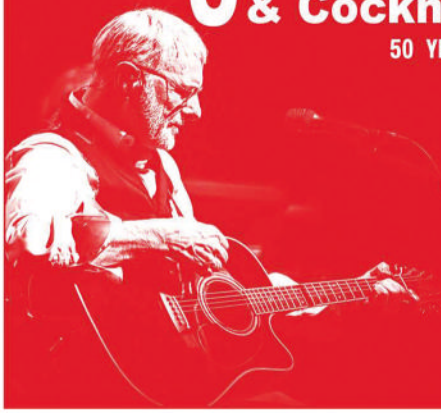

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WOLVERHAMPTON THE WULFRUN

SAT 2 DEC
PETERBOROUGH CRESSET

FRI 15 DEC
BUXTON OPERA HOUSE

FRI 22 DEC
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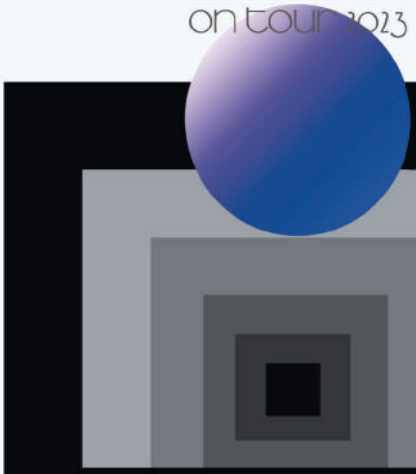

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ARTS CENTRE THEATRE

WEDNESDAY 22
SALFORD
LOWRY QUAYS THEATRE

~~THURSDAY 23~~ SOLD OUT
BURY ST EDMUNDS
THE APEX

~~SATURDAY 25~~ LOW TICKETS
SHEFFIELD
UPPER CHAPEL

SUNDAY 26
SUNDERLAND
FIRE STATION

~~TUESDAY 28~~ SOLD OUT
BASINGSTOKE
THE HAYMARKET

WEDNESDAY 29
OXFORD SJE ARTS

THURSDAY 30
BRISTOL
ST GEORGES

FEBRUARY 2024

FRIDAY 16
SWINDON
WYVERN THEATRE

SATURDAY 17
FROME
MEMORIAL THEATRE

MONDAY 19
CHELMSFORD
THEATRE

TUESDAY 20
PORTSMOUTH
NEW THEATRE ROYAL

WEDNESDAY 21
EPSOM PLAYHOUSE

SATURDAY 24
STOCKTON THE ARC

SUNDAY 25
LYTHAM ST ANNES
LOWTHER PAVILION

MONDAY 26
NEW BRIGHTON
FLORAL PAVILION

WEDNESDAY 28
WOLVERHAMPTON
WULFRUN HALL

THURSDAY 29
CHELTENHAM
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★★★★★

'A WONDERFULLY GIFTED SINGER WHO HAS EMERGED AS ONE OF THE MOST NATURAL AND APPEALING LIVE PERFORMERS'
SUNDAY TIMES

KENNY THOMAS

OCTOBER 2023
TUE 31 LEEDS CITY VARIETIES

NOVEMBER 2023
THU 02 GATESHEAD SAGE 2 LOW TICKETS
FRI 03 GLASGOW ST LUKES LOW TICKETS
SAT 04 MANCHESTER RNCM THEATRE LOW TICKETS
FRI 10 EASTLEIGH THE CONCORDE CLUB LOW TICKETS
THU 16 CARDIFF TRAMSHED SOLD OUT
SUN 19 SOUTHEND PALACE THEATRE SOLD OUT
WED 22 BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL SOLD OUT
SAT 25 NOTTINGHAM THE PLAYHOUSE SOLD OUT
SUN 26 NEW BRIGHTON FLORAL PAVILION
TUE 28 PETERBOROUGH THE CRESSET THEATRE

DECEMBER 2023
SAT 02 LONDON INDIGO AT THE O2 LOW TICKETS
SUN 03 SOUTHEND PALACE THEATRE

MAY 2024
THU 16 WARWICK ARTS CENTRE THEATRE
FRI 17 EDINBURGH QUEENS HALL
SAT 18 BUXTON OPERA HOUSE
SUN 19 YORK GRAND OPERA HOUSE
TUE 21 BRISTOL ST GEORGE'S
THU 23 PORTSMOUTH NEW THEATRE ROYAL
FRI 24 GUILDFORD G LIVE
SAT 25 BEXHILL DE LA WARR PAVILION
SUN 26 IPSWICH CORN EXCHANGE

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A SENBLA PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH NIGHTFLY & RUNWAY ARTISTS

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

Lucinda Williams

The Americana outlier bows to Bob Dylan's Highway 61 Revisited (Columbia, 1965).

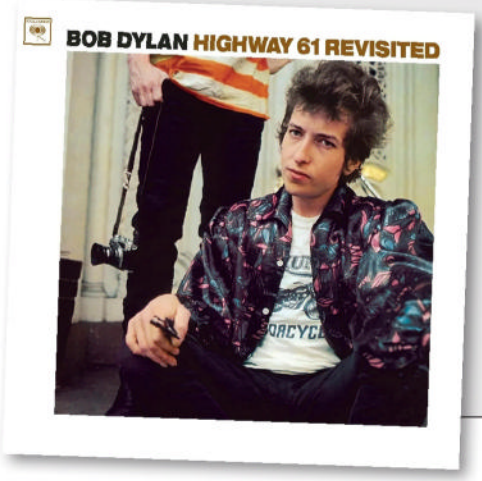
We were living in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. My dad, who was a writer and poet, was teaching at Louisiana State University, and he had a meeting with one of his students at our house. This student walks into the living room waving *Highway 61* and saying, "You have to listen to this, it's amazing!" I was 12, I had just started taking guitar lessons and was really into the whole folk scene, but I'd never really heard Bob Dylan – I might have heard a song on the radio or a cover, but I'd never really *studied* him. They went into another room and left this record on the table. I very carefully put it on the stereo, and BOOM!

The words were so mysterious and there was something about the way they worked with the music that connected with me. It was immediate gratification. The photograph on the sleeve alone was enough to shake you. It's hard to recall exactly what was going through my brain when I was 12, but I remember thinking, I want to be connected to this somehow, I want to learn how to do this. I used to spend hours and hours, just me and my guitar, trying to figure out the chords and the lyrics, just learning his songs. That's how I learned how to write. Those songs were my teachers. I've cracked it to some extent, but it continues to amaze and move me.

When I got my first record deal, the A&R guy came down and we were talking about producers. I said, What about [*Highway 61* producer] Bob Johnston? He said, "Who's Bob Johnston?" I said, Well he produced *Blonde On Blonde*… This guy goes, "Is that a band?" From that point on his credibility was shot. That was the beginning of my disillusionment with the record industry!

As told to Chris Catchpole

Stories From A Rock N Roll Heart is out now on Highway 20 Records/Thirty Tigers.



MOJO at 30

STEVE COOGAN, CRIME FICTION AND US TV? IT'S MOJO IN POPULAR CULTURE!

ADAM AND JOE

6 Music tag-team DJs Adam Buxton and Joe Cornish's regular feature Song Wars involved making up witty satirical tunes in the style of Bowie, Dylan and others. In 2008 it alighted on MOJO, with Buxton brewing up two short numbers respectively in the style of late-period Fall ("Other magazines don't cater to my specific tastes," delivered in a full-commitment Mark E Smith gurgle) and Loser-era, sample-scratching Beck ("So eclectic we use *eclecticity*"). Of course, it remains a choice career high for contributors Sylvie Simmons, Andrew Male and Ian Harrison to get namechecks in the latter tune.

SAXONDALE

Steve Coogan's TV character Tommy Saxondale – a pest controller with anger-management issues – was a loyal reader of MOJO: in the first episode of series two, he's seen reading the February 2007 issue in a newsagent. Offered a cut-price Galaxy, he retorts, "With MOJO it should be half-price Moroccan black (*mimes 'doobie smoking'*)," and when asked if he's actually buying the magazine, says, "I get this delivered." He'd just told the newsagent that he knew MOJO had flipped a photo of a guitarist, as "there is no way he is a left-handed guitarist… I should know, I rigged his stack on the Snow Goose tour" (that would be Camel guitarist Andrew Latimer, then. Disclaimer: there was no such picture in MOJO 159).

GILMORE GIRLS

In the October 2001 'Nick & Nora/Sid & Nancy' episode of the US comedy drama, protagonist daughter Rory and her pal Lane discuss necessary sounds: as well as Mingus's *The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady*, the MC5's *Kick Out The Jams* and *Here Are The Sonics*, Lane says she needs the Bee Gees' *Odessa*. When questioned on this, Lane proffers a copy of (the just-published) book The MOJO Collection: The Greatest Albums Of All Time and says, "Well, MOJO says." To which Rory replies, "So it must be true."

JO NESBØ'S DETECTIVE HARRY HOLE

Star of 12 Scandi-Noir novels, the Oslo Crime Squad's moral, heavy-drinking anti-hero digs his music, with references to Kendrick Lamar, Pink Floyd, Duke Ellington, Patti Smith, ABBA, John Coltrane, Sex Pistols and Hendrix jostling for space (does Harry want to do All Back To My Place?). Accordingly, in 2000 novel The Redbreast, his colleague Ellen asks for his copy of MOJO. For more MOJO criminality, Peter Robinson's 2006 Inspector Banks novel Piece Of My Heart features thankfully imaginary MOJO freelancer Nick Barber being murdered for working on a piece about nefarious '60s psych freaks the Mad Hatters. A description of MOJO's "cluttered, but appealingly so" office is bang on (did Robinson visit?), and the staffer in a tie had to be Fred Dellar. Music nut Banks, meanwhile, admits he doesn't keep his back issues.

IN THE LOOP

In Armando Iannucci's 2009 mordant comedy film In The Loop – a spin-off from political satire The Thick Of It – government special adviser Toby (Chris Addison) is kicked out by his civil servant girlfriend Suzy (Olivia Poulet) with the words, "Take your backlog of MOJO and your shit clothes and your eighth of dope and your flute, and piss off." Touché. It also stars the beloved fixer Malcolm Tucker brought to splenetic life by Peter Capaldi, who fronted Glasgow post-punks the Dreamboys in the early '80s.

Thanks to Adam Buxton for the WAVs. Spotted MOJOs on TV or at the movies? Tell us at mojoreaders @bauermedia.co.uk

"With MOJO it should be half-price Moroccan black."
SAXONDALE

"Pack of Camel, please": Steve Coogan as Tommy Saxondale checks out the smokin' MOJO 159.

Danny Clinch, Alamy (2)

All Mod cons: The Prisoners (from left) Allan Crockford, Johnny Symons, James Taylor and Graham Day in 1983; (inset) the band today on the steps of Abbey Road Studios.

MEDWAY GARAGE-MODS THE PRISONERS BUST OUT, AGAIN!

"PRETTY MUCH everything we did was destructive." Graham Day of Medway Scene heroes The Prisoners is reflecting on the first half of the 1980s, years that flickered tantalisingly for his band, then routinely kicked them in the teeth. "It would have been better if we hadn't been battling people who thought we should sound like Duran Duran."

Formed in Rochester, Kent in 1980 as the Mod revival foundered, they were as influenced by psychedelia, garage rock and punk as the Small Faces. Until their '86 split, the band released four albums, but were hampered by poor promotion, a hostile music press and, just as things were happening, an imploding label that couldn't repress their sold-out final LP.

Not everybody remembers the aggravation, however. "I thought it went all right. That was the happiest period of my life," counters James Taylor, whose Hammond organ was The Prisoners' USB. "I felt we were getting somewhere but I'm not sure we really wanted success."

"For me it was more social than aspirational," agrees Day. "I love playing in front of 100 people, getting home with cuts all over my face from getting smacked by the mike."

Splitting up was hard for Day, Taylor, bassist Allan Crockford and drummer Johnny Symons, pals since aged 11. Symons quit music; the others' careers merit one of Pete Frame's Rock Family Trees, with groups including The SolarFlares, The Galileo 7 and The James Taylor Quartet. "I went on tour," recalls Taylor, "but Johnny, my best mate, wasn't there. I was heartbroken. There was a long grieving process."

After Taylor was approached by a film producer who wanted to use a 1982 album track in 2022, he contacted Day for the first time in 15 years. Then Symons determined to start playing drums again. Taylor and Crockford had a gig with a mate's band; why not join them on-stage? "I didn't have a clue Johnny and Jamie were going to be there, too," says Day. "I'd had a lot to drink and I thought, Oh bollocks, I've got to get up. So I did, and we played four songs. It was brilliant."

They scheduled a gig in Rochester for December 2022. It sold out in two hours; tickets for a second vanished in three minutes. Despite an extended run, so many fans missed out that The Prisoners will be playing their biggest-ever headline show at London's Roundhouse in May 2024. Then Symons suggested they make a record; Taylor knew a man at Abbey Road. Swanky surroundings, but the spirit was still in the garage. "We spent two days on the first album," laughs Day, "but we only had 12 hours in Abbey Road."

"I see bands doing big business and they're miserable," points out Taylor. "Me and those guys, we're 60 and still having a laugh. For me, that is success."

David Hutcheon

The Prisoners play the Roundhouse on May 24, 2024.

> **"That was the happiest period of my life."**
> **JAMES TAYLOR**

Eugene Doyen

JAIL FORCE

Prime Prisoners, times three.

A Taste Of Pink!

(OWN-UP, 1982)

Raw and unadulterated garage punk with "no poncey overdubs," it was meant as a memento of a fun couple of years playing pub gigs. "It seems to have stood the test of time, though," reckons Taylor.

The Wisermiser-demelza

(BIG BEAT, 1983)

Full psychedelic overdrive engaged. Day didn't appreciate producer Phil Chevron meddling, but he was being coaxed towards his most powerful vocal performances. Hindsight suggests '83 should have been their year; for proof, play the Electric Fit EP.

The Last Fourfathers

(OWN-UP, 1985)

The most satisfying studio experience. Sales were modest, but its influence on The Charlatans, Inspiral Carpets etc would be obvious when wearing the 1960s on your paisley sleeve was next back in vogue.

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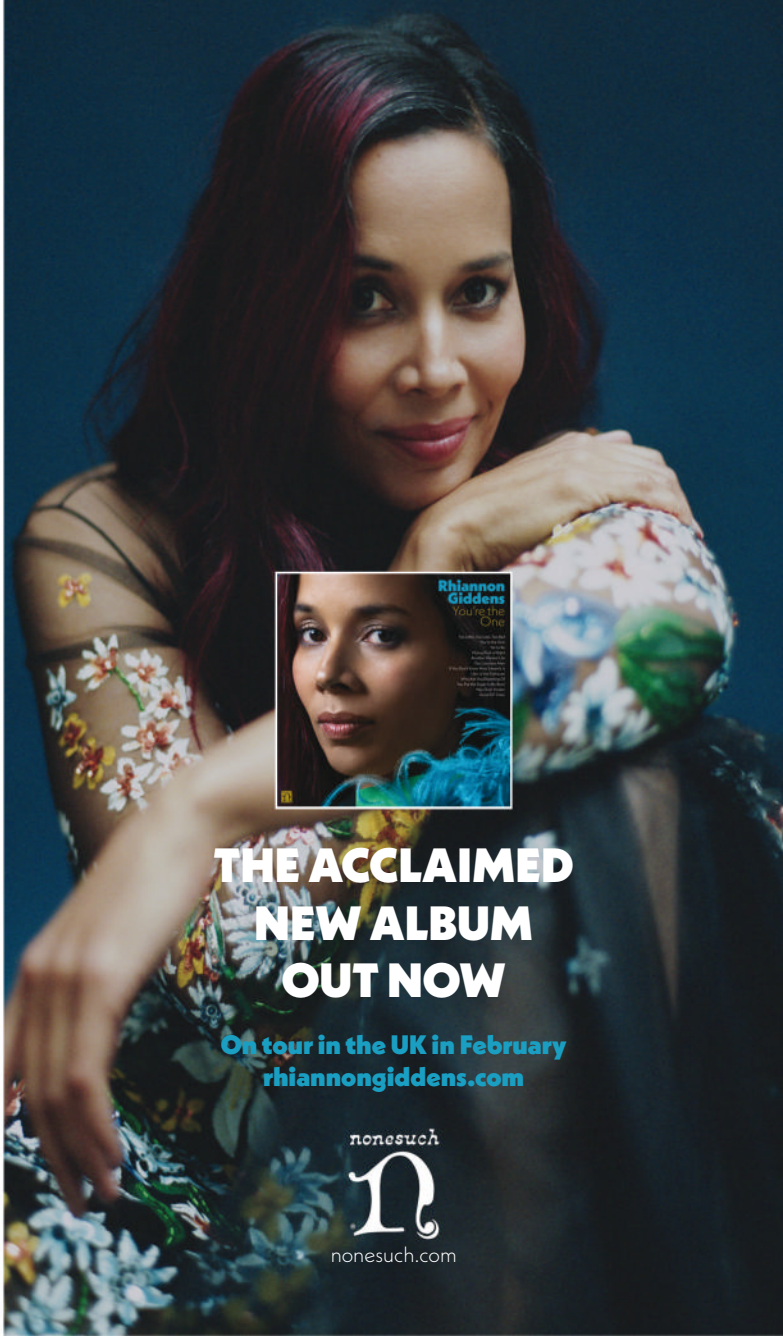

THE ACCLAIMED NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

On tour in the UK in February
rhiannongiddens.com

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nonesuch.com

Wild spirit: Jeremy Dutcher wants to "invite more people into my story".

"Europeans have always struggled with our words."
JEREMY DUTCHER

THE GREAT SPIRITUAL POWER OF JEREMY DUTCHER, RADICAL VOICE OF INDIGENOUS CANADA

AMONG THE outfits Jeremy Dutcher has chosen to complement his brooding, rousing piano ballads, the one he wears in the video for his latest single, Take My Hand, is the most revealing: not just a white cape, lace dress and sparkly earrings, but a medicine pouch necklace gifted by his Grand Chief from the Wolastoq community of indigenous Canada. There is footage, too, of the trans elder Dancing Bear, a jingle-dress dancer who, like Dutcher, identifies as Two-Spirit: "The intersection of feminine and masculine," Dutcher explains.

"I want to put these images out there, indigenous and queer, because I didn't see anything like them when I was young, not from TV or YouTube," Dutcher adds. "I'm excited to give them to the world, and see it ripple outwards."

Dutcher has already caused multiple ripples, having emulated indigenous legend Buffy Sainte-Marie by winning the Polaris prize (Canada's Mercury equivalent) and a Juno (their BRITs, for Best Indigenous Album) for his 2018 debut, *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa*. The album was a collection of forgotten Wolastoq songs, recorded onto wax cylinder in the early 1900s and preserved at Canada's Museum Of History, which the classically-trained tenor then reinterpreted in a contemporary folk-operatic style while still singing in his native Wolastoqiyik.

"Our language is critically endangered, with under 500 speakers left," says Dutcher. "I'm trying to breathe life into it, but I also sing in English on the new album, with my own songs, because I want to invite more people into my story."

Combining Wolastoqiyik and English lyrics, Dutcher's new album *Motewolonuwok* is more florid than its predecessor, with his grand piano occasionally gilded by Owen Pallett's orchestrations. His deep-set voice, and an intense delivery combined with a tender touch, has prompted comparisons to Anohni, "I think because, when you open your voice, you sing from your spirit," says Dutcher. "And there is a vulnerability in vibrato, which we share." But the artist he feels closest to is Nina Simone. "Nina really impacted me when I was growing up. But when I also understood her political message, that *really* set a fire under me."

With an indigenous mother and white father, Dutcher grew up straddling both worlds. "There wasn't a moment when I wasn't singing," he says. "I'd make up nonsense songs, and strum my little guitar." When he was eight, Dutcher's mother sent him to Elder Doctor Maggie Paul, "who taught me how to properly find my voice. It was so different to my classical education at college, which was rooted in replication and competition."

Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa translates as 'People Of The Beautiful River' – namely the Tobique river in New Brunswick, on whose banks Dutcher's community have lived for millennia. The dictionary definition of *Motewolonuwok* – 'Witches' – is more contentious. "It should be, 'The ones of great spiritual power,'" Dutcher argues. "Who were often Two-Spirit. Europeans have always struggled with our words."

As much activist as artist, Dutcher has gone as far as only performing in Wales (in 2019) out of all the UK territories. "I wanted to plug into other indigenous communities, and the Welsh are experiencing a language revival," he says. "But I'll see you all soon. Make me an offer!"

Martin Aston

Jeremy Dutcher's Motewolonuwok is out on October 6 on Secret City.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Anohni, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Beverly Glenn-Copeland
- Dutcher's path to *Motewolonuwok* began with a line from a poem by Two-Spirit Cherokee writer Qwo-Li Driskill. "From the heavy debris of loss, together we emerge."
- Take My Hand's lyrics are by Dutcher's friend, fellow Canadian Basia Bulat. "I'd never written in English before," he says. "After I played it to Basia, she sent seven pages of lyrics. She said, 'Use whatever you want.'"
- Dutcher is the youngest of four musical brothers. "One's a jazz pianist, one plays classical, and the other also sings and plays guitar."

KEY TRACKS

- Mehcinut
- Ancestors Too Young
- Skicinuwihkuk

Kirk Lisaj

2023'S BREAKOUT STAR OF UNDERGROUND RAP UNMASKED: BILLY WOODS!

AFTER YEARS OF flying below the radar, Billy Woods is enjoying a moment in the sun. Beloved by Thom Yorke, who featured him on a recent Radio 6 Music Mix, the cultured New York rapper's recent collaborations with Future Islands frontman Sam Herring, British jazz lion Shabaka Hutchings and spoken-word poet Moor Mother have helped highlight a talent Woods himself has sometimes sought to obscure. Woods has rejected hip-hop's cult of personality, using balaclavas, pixilation and creative angles to obscure his face in photos and videos. "It started out as a necessity," says Woods, not his real name, "and came to represent me accurately. I enjoy my privacy. I don't care to be recognised."

> **"This record's traversing a big, decrepit and beautiful cityscape."**
> BILLY WOODS

The sheer quality of Woods' recent album output has made his image seem irrelevant. Prolific, but with a firm grasp on quality control, last year's *Aethiopes* (an extended look at the horrors of colonialism) and *Church* (a sprawling personal history) were trumped by 2023 career apex *Maps*, written alongside producer Kenny Segal. While Woods is keen to sing Segal's praises ("He pulls stuff out of left-field that allows me to go to different chambers"), it's Woods' meditations on travel that cut deepest. "I moved to Zimbabwe at five and back to the United States at 13," he says (his parents being a Jamaican professor and Zimbabwean scholar). "That shaped everything that came after."

Much of Woods' appeal is down to his deceptively conversational rhyming style. Well-read yet street savvy, his rhymes can take many plays to decipher (see No Hard Feelings' take on the crack epidemic), a complexity that extends into his parallel career as half of rapid-fire duo Armand Hammer alongside fellow rapper Elucid. This month's sixth Armand Hammer LP, *We Buy Diabetic Test Strips*, finds them sparring with a clutch of guests (including Run The Jewels' El-P) about modern life. "It's writing from the home front, from the streets, it's brightly lit," says Woods. "Our last album [2021's *Haram*] was like being in a series of caves, rudimentary huts or basement apartments. This record is traversing some sort of big, ultimately decrepit and beautiful cityscape."

Now in his mid forties, Woods' upwardly mobile status belies his struggles in the early 2000s, whether recording solo or as half of Super Chron Flight Brothers, trying to build up his independent Backwoodz Studioz label. It came to a head in 2012 with *History Will Absolve Me*, a swan song to the industry that rejected him. "Everything was on edge," says Woods. "Our distribution situation dissolved and I lost my day job. Shit was pretty dire. Instead of a studio, we recorded the album in our engineer's kitchen. Previously I had used collaborations to hide my deficits, but the situation forced me to step up to the plate. In my mind it was a parting shot."

Instead it began a reversal of fortunes that's seen Woods escape obscurity via a remarkable body of work determined to make listeners think. It ain't illegal yet.

Andy Cowan

Maps by Billy Woods & Kenny Segal is out now on Backwoodz Studioz. Armand Hammer's We Buy Diabetic Test Strips follows on September 29 on Fat Possum.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of Public Enemy, MF DOOM, Company Flow
- Woods had "no cognisance you could become a rapper" until he met Vordul Mega, half of Harlem rap duo Cannibal Ox, when he was 19. "He was very encouraging. He liked camaraderie and rapping for fun."
- A father of two, Woods recently published a first children's book A Is For Anarchist, written with illustrator Myra Musgrove. "It was a cool experience." A memoir follows next.
- "I've always had a cat in my life," says Woods. "My cat's called Dumile (after MF DOOM). He's a tuxedo, black and white, green eyes, very cute. He's a ferocious killer of all living things smaller than him."

KEY TRACKS

- Soft Landing
- Remorseless
- Red Dust

Can't see the Woods...: Billy rejects hip-hop's cult of personality.

B.A. Stubbs, Getty

MOJO PLAYLIST

The month's dub funk, racy pagans and fresh soul.

1 AL GREEN PERFECT DAY
Reverend Al makes sacred capital out of Lou's heroin epiphany, with the Hi Rhythm Section in support. The "You're gonna reap just what you sow" climax is magnificent.
Find it: *streaming services*

2 JONI MITCHELL HELP ME (DEMO)
The first revelation from Joni's forthcoming *Archives Vol. 3*: a solo demo of Help Me that shows her leap from acoustic troubadour to jazz sophisticate wasn't so great after all.
Find it: *YouTube*

3 BLACK PUMAS MORE THAN A LOVE SONG
From the Grammy winners' second LP, fresh-but-classic soul moves and a cry for survival. And dig the chess/talking-to-dogs video.
Find it: *YouTube*

4 THE MIRACULOUS LOVE KIDS FT BETH GIBBONS ATMOSPHERE/"HEROES"
Young female musicians forced to leave the Taliban's Afghanistan and the Portishead singer sweetly conjoin Joy Division and Bowie in a message of hope over death. Donate at miraculouslovekids.org.
Find it: *YouTube*

5 CYBOTRON MAINTAIN
Detroit techno Old One Juan Atkins' alter-ego's first new track for 28 years, this hot-and-cold robo-funk soundtracks the eternal night drive of the soul.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

6 PRINCE FATTY EXPANSIONS
Jazz flutes for peace! Brit reggae producer's tribute to Lonnie Liston Smith dubs up its jazz-funk foundations with soulful longing.
Find it: *Bandcamp*

7 KATY J PEARSON & H HAWKLINE GENTLY JOHNNY
KJP's birdsong voice gives excellent 'racy pagan' on an EP of covers of Paul Giovanni's ersatz folk soundtrack to The Wicker Man.
Find it: *YouTube*

8 PRINCE ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS
A '91 off-cut made using synths and loops, this mantric funk is minimal and sumptuous. From the special edition *Diamonds And Pearls*.
Find it: *streaming services*

9 CMAT SOMETHING YOU SAID
John Grant-approved Dublin singer channels lonesome country where the '80s-epic and the kitchen sink meet. From new album *Crazymad, For Me*.
Find it: *streaming services*

10 SAY SHE SHE REELING
Brooklyn trio's 'discodelic soul' pairs Nile Rodgers' pitched-up groove to rousing Springsteen-worthy entreaties to rise up.
Find it: *streaming services*

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Born poor on the **side of a mountain,** she's the **country mogul** who's only now, **at 77, learning to rock.** Another of those surprises she keeps on springing? **"I just go where my heart leads,"** says **Dolly Parton.**

Interview by **GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN** • Portrait by **VIJAT MOHINDRA**

DOLLY PARTON DOES NOT MUCH CARE for casual handshakes or perfunctory hugs.

In late June, on a steamy Nashville night in an industrial enclave of the Tennessee capital, a phalanx of armed security guards and coiffed personal assistants direct traffic in a concrete hallway belonging to Parton's manager. Parton's latest album, *Rockstar*, the collab-crammed, 30-song release inspired by her 2021 induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, is still five months from release. But she has invited family members and the musicians who played on it to a private listening party, servers circling the room with platters of chips, salsa, and churros.

Sartorially, Parton is channelling 'rock' in a white body suit, split down the legs and bound together with stitching that suggests chain mail. She stands in front of a banner twice her size, bearing her name and *Rockstar*'s heavy metal-lite logo, posing for photos with every attendee. Her helpers struggle to maintain a single-file line, to keep it moving, people.

Parton, 77, isn't exactly helping. She gabs with guests like a childhood friend, clasping the hands of strangers in both of hers and howling when she recognises someone. When a newlywed pair flank her, she says, "Now I *know* why you got married," pointing to a burgeoning baby bump. Everyone in the corridor erupts.

"I can fit in with anybody, anywhere, in any situation, whether it be the White House or the outhouse," Parton tells MOJO, guffawing. "I'm comfortable with that, because I'm comfortable with me."

Such is the wisdom of Parton. She is, after all, one of the great songwriters of her generation, a fact sometimes overshadowed by her outsized personality. Born on a mountain at Tennessee's eastern edge, her 1964 move to Nashville was to open one of country music's deepest veins, though it took a daring decision, in 1974, to quit country standard bearer Porter Wagoner's iconic television show for her talent to fully flower. Parton penned Jolene and I Will Always Love You within days of one another, capturing them on the same demo album. Coat Of Many Colors, My Tennessee Mountain Home, 9 To 5, Light Of A Clear Blue Morning: entire chapters of the country songbook belong to Parton.

Despite more than a half-century of stardom, she remains committed to both home and work. For nearly 60 years, she has been married to Carl Dean, a steadfastly private man she met as a struggling songwriter washing dirty clothes in Nashville. She owns a theme park, Dollywood, around the mountain from her birthplace. She runs a sprawling childhood literacy programme and made a $1 million donation to Covid vaccine research in Tennessee.

And still, Parton cannot fathom being done. On the same night people are finally hearing her rock opus, she talks about her plans to make a gospel counterpart while launching her own television network, a line of wigs, and a TV series that captures her uncanny life story in candid detail. ➢

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Angel Olsen on country's divine **Wiggy Stardust.**

"Dolly has been so many people. She's created this doll character she uses in the same way David Bowie did, to turn heads so people listen to what she's saying. She's really smart. And the wigs! I don't know if she did say 'The higher the hair the closer to God' but she could have. She's such a force."

Courtesy of Butterfly Records, Angela Ricciardi

➤ "Every day, I wake up with new stuff on my mind, new dreams to dream. And every dream brings on some other new dream, because you see all these opportunities from the last thing you did," she says. "I never know exactly what I'm going to do. I just go where my heart leads."

You're in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, but you've just made your first rock'n'roll record. When was the first time you heard rock music?

When I was 10 or 11, I remember everybody talking about Elvis Presley. I'm from a holy roller family, and my grandpa was Pentecostal Christian. But all the girls were talking about Elvis, and all the parents were thinking we were going to go to hell: "We've got to keep the kids from seeing any of that."

We didn't have a television, but me and a bunch of girlfriends – Judy Ogle; Colleen Reagan, who eventually became my hairdresser; Judith McMahan – heard Elvis was going to be on TV. We sneaked off and went down to a neighbour's, the closest people that had a television. Clyde McCarter: he's long dead and gone, but he had a farm. I remember us walking through the weeds. We were scared, but we were going to take that chance, even if we got our asses beat. We stood outside and looked through the window, at Elvis. I remember thinking that was the most magical – we'd never seen anybody moving their parts that way, the boys.

What about rock in, say, the last 60 years?

I never thought about being rock'n'roll. Country was my vein, mountain music. I recorded through the years different rock songs, covered things – Collective Soul, REO Speedwagon. My husband, Carl, is a rock'n'roll freak, the craziest thing. He only likes rock'n'roll, with the exception that he loves Merle Haggard and Lester Flatt. He's one of those acid rockers. Led Zeppelin was his favourite group. The harder, the better. AC/DC he loved, Bachman-Turner Overdrive, anything that was loud and exciting. He loved that song every time it comes on in Miami Vice, Won't Get Fooled Again. Carl loved Judas Priest. I've heard everything that's ever been done in rock'n'roll.

And how about your music?

Carl, he never really particularly liked country music. He loved *me*, but he was never really that fond of my music. This is not a bad thing. I wrote one song on this album when I was a girl, the one I do with Simon Le Bon, My Blue Tears. One day Carl heard me singing that song, and he said, "Now, that's a good song." We were just young and married, so I remembered. When I got ready to do *Rockstar*, something told me to do it. It's one of my favourite songs on there.

When you were nominated for the Hall of Fame, you essentially said, 'Thanks, but no thanks.' They voted you in, anyway…

I never meant at all to be controversial. But when you say "Rock and Roll Hall of Fame", that should be for the people that spend their lives working in rock'n'roll. I've spent mine in country. I'll take anything they give me in country. I thought I was going to be taking votes from other people. I said I'd rather bow out, because I didn't think I'd earned it. I still don't. But I figured if I was going to get it, I was going to have to earn it. I decided if I was going to ever do this album, now is the time to show people I can sing rock'n'roll. I'm doing it for my legacy. I'm doing it for after I'm gone, years from now.

What was the hardest part of *Rockstar*?

Making sure we did it right, because I didn't intend to do it again. Making certain that we got the right people. It was really about doing it once, doing it good, and doing a lot of it. I used to hear people say these rock people take a year, two years to do an album. I thought, That is so crazy. It's such a waste of money. They're just going down to the studio and hanging around on the record label's money. I take that all back, because I can really see how it takes that long to get something good that you feel right about. It took us a full year. In country, if you got a mind to, you can have a record done and out in eight weeks, three months at the most. That would be a heavy-duty album.

So there won't be a sequel?

I won't do another. I won't need to – 30 songs is a lot. I may sing a song. I just got a call from Elton John the other day, saying, "Would you sing on *my* album?" I bet I'm going to get to do a lot of that. We've done a few things together, been on the same shows. Years ago, he did the Country Music Association Awards and sang with me on Imagine. We went backstage, and he knows all these country songs, these classics. We were backstage singing so good together. I didn't know he knew songs like Behind Closed Doors or Make The World Go Away. We said, "Man, we should do a duet of country songs," but we never got around to that.

You've mentioned your own mortality and the legacy you want to leave several times. You're 77. How much is that on your mind?

Well, I *will* be gone. I'll be 78 in January. I could live to be a hundred. I hope not, but I might. I don't dwell on that. But once in a while, I'll think, God, in 10 years I'll be 87 years old. What are the chances I'll even be around? Maybe I will, maybe I won't. I believe in making hay while the sun shines. I want to do everything I can. I also want to *see* what all I can do. I don't have kids. My husband, he's always loved being around the house. He's been proud of me. He wants me to do whatever I want to do. I just want to work until I can't work no more.

One part of aging, of course, is losing people, confidants and collaborators. How hard has that been?

I've lost so many people I grew up with. It started, of course, with Uncle Bill [Owens,

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Queen Of Country: Dolly down the days.

1 Hello, I'm Dolly: the five-year-old Parton in 1951.

2 Right combination: Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton, AKA 'the Dynamic Duo of Country Music', 1970.

3 The Blue Ridge Mountain boy: Dolly with husband Carl Dean.

4 Presidential sweet: Parton meets Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter at the White House, Washington DC, October 2, 1979.

5 Back home: Parton with her parents Avie Lee and Robert 'Lee', from the 1987 TV series Dolly.

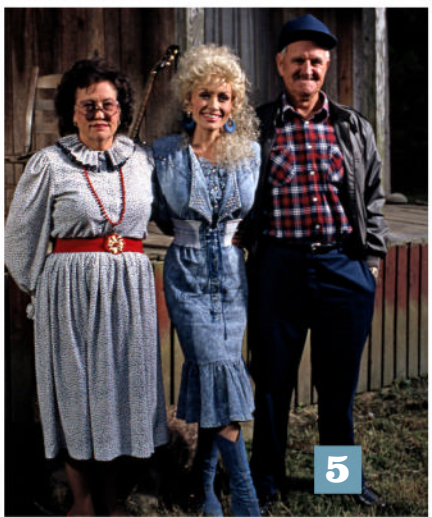
6 Power trio: Linda Ronstadt, Dolly Parton and Emmylou Harris, 1987.

7 Sister act: Parton on-set with her 9-To-5 movie co-stars Lily Tomlin and Jane Fonda, 1980.

8 "We never had a love affair but we had a beautiful love": Dolly with Kenny Rogers, 1988.

9 Country feedback: Parton performs Jolene with Eurythmics' Dave Stewart and Judas Priest's Rob Halford at her induction to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Los Angeles, November 5, 2022.

10 "People get off on thinking I'm some kind of saint, but I ain't": Dolly Parton, American icon, 1971.



Courtesy Dolly Parton, Getty (7), Shutterstock, Alamy

country songwriter], who helped me a lot. And Porter Wagoner, who was the first big star that was my first big opportunity. I lost Porter, then I lost Kenny [Rogers]. And Loretta [Lynn]. A lot of my old friends on the Opry, I outlived nearly all of them. But I don't think of it in terms of anything other than, "That's life," the aging process. Porter had an aneurysm; then he died before his time. The same with Kenny. You miss them.

Who do you miss the most?

Right now, it's Kenny. We never had a love affair, but we had a beautiful love. We did all the good stuff that goes with that without dirtying it up with a sexual relationship that falls apart. But Kenny and I had all the passion, all the fun. We were funny and crazy, and we knew each other so well. I missed him a lot the first year. I'll think about people, and I'm about to call them. Then I think, Well, I can't call them. They're not there. We've all lived a great life. And when I go, I know I will have left, hopefully, a lot of stuff behind for people to analyse, talk about, worry about, fret about, and wonder why they didn't ask.

Joining and leaving Porter Wagoner's show jumpstarted your career. How important has trusting your instinct been?

I live by my gut. I live by that thing inside me that tells me even when I'm doing something that's shady. I don't mean wicked or nothing, but when you're pushing the envelope, I always know in my heart. I never go too far after I feel that. I'd rather do without it than do with it and not feel good about it. I'm glad I've got the talent to pull it all off, but my desire has always been greater than my fear and sometimes greater than my talent. I really feel like I know what's best for me.

Was there a moment you could see that your desire was greater than your talent?

My [syndicated TV] variety show [called Dolly, which ran from 1976-77]. I was anxious to do it, but I knew in my heart I did not have the kind of talent in that world they were trying to push me into. They were trying to revive the old variety shows. I had said early on I really didn't want to do a show if I couldn't be myself and do things I understood. But I went ahead and done it because my desire to be able to present myself, to have a great vehicle to do the things I wanted, was a big deal to me. But when I'm not comfortable, it shows. One of the reasons I am what I am is because I go with my feelings. I've come across real, even though I look artificial. People accept it. But I went ahead and done it, but I wasn't talented enough.

> **"All the girls** were talking about **Elvis,** and **all the parents** were thinking we were **going to go to hell."**

Did you worry about that with *Rockstar*, that your ambition might be greater than your ability?

There was a little bit of hesitancy. I thought maybe I shouldn't do it, because I'll be criticised to no end if it don't turn out good. We did it demo-style when we first started recording, because I did it in secret. Nobody in my whole group except [producer] Kent [Wells] and me and the musicians – and they were sworn to secrecy – knew. I said, I don't want anybody to know I'm doing this because I'm getting pressure from somewhere saying, "Oh, wrong producer, wrong this, wrong that." I was concerned if I could actually sing it good, if my pipes would handle singing true rock'n'roll, if I could scream that hard, work that hard. And to impress the people that spent their life doing it. I wanted the rock world to be proud of what I've done.

You mentioned criticism, but there is this longtime deification of Dolly Parton that transcends music. How do you deal with this elevated public idea of who you are?

I've been around so long, and I am like an all-American girl, all-American person. People relate to me, knowing I'm from a big family, knowing I'm kind of a Cinderella story. Because I'm so open with myself and with my family, people think of me like a family member. I've been in their house, on television since the Porter Wagoner days. They feel like they know me. I'm somebody in everybody's family, like a favourite aunt or a big sister.

But I can't help how people adore me. There are people who get off on thinking I'm some kind of saint, but I ain't. That's a hard responsibility for me to try to live up to, what other people think. I appreciate the fact that people seem to care about me, but I can't let that get in the way of if I cuss on a record or whatever. There's going to be some Christian good ol' boy saying, "Oh, she shouldn't have said *that*." But to me, I do what I feel right about. It might disappoint me that I've disappointed somebody, but it ain't going to stop me from being who I am. Words are just an exchange, like money. I don't think the fact if you say 'damn' or 'hell', that's going to make a difference in ➢

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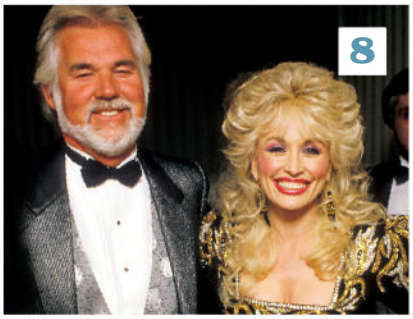
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"I just want to work until I can't work no more": Dolly Parton in Nashville, January 26, 2023.

who and what you are. I never put myself on the pedestal, so I'm hoping I don't get knocked off. If I do, it ain't going to change me.

The guests on this record come from political extremes. It's surprising to see Kid Rock [a Trump backer who recently attacked the Budweiser beer brand's partnership with trans influencer Dylan Mulvaney] on a record with Paul McCartney, Elton John, Pink, and

"I live by my gut. I live by that **thing inside me** that tells me even when I'm doing **something that's shady."**

your goddaughter, Miley Cyrus. Was that spectrum important?

No, I never even thought of that. I had already recorded the song with Kid before that whole thing happened. I don't know if I would have had him on the record had that happened before. Chances are I would have, because he did a great job. I'm going to always have somebody telling me, even in my own family, I should or should not have done this or that: "What are you doing hanging around with that little gay thing? That little gay guy?" I say, You know what? I love people. I don't care. It ain't my place to judge anybody. And it's nobody else's place to do it, either. If they do, they need to be a hell of a lot more spiritual than they are before they start throwing rocks with that glass house.

You've always been an advocate for talking about difficult topics and ideas, whether it's songs about suicide, inequality and abuse, or via your Imagination Library nonprofit that gifts books to preschoolers. But now Americans are banning books, proscribing how we talk about history. How do you see that?

Oh, I ain't even going to talk about that. I've tried to be smart enough to stay out of the thick of it. No matter what you talk about, there's another half of the world that don't go there. I want to be for everybody. If you're a damn redneck, whatever you are, that's who you are. Leopards don't change spots. That doesn't mean we can't make improvements. You don't have to pounce on everything if you're a leopard. You can just walk around and be beautiful, try to do good stuff.

Are there ideas, though, we shouldn't discuss? Or should we be discussing more?

It's too late now to say what we should and shouldn't do. Everything is out there. Kids know everything. They see everything. They hear everything. We have to discuss stuff. I know this sounds like a selfish, awful thing to say, but I'm almost glad I never had children. I worry myself to death about my little nieces and nephews and grandnieces and grandnephews. My husband and I, we just think of ourselves as each other's child. He's my only child, and I'm his only child. It seems like we're not making any progress, mostly because nobody's trying. Nobody's willing to listen to anybody else. Everybody already knows everything. You're going to teach your children the same thing, whether it's right or wrong.

In my own family, half of them are Democrats, half of them are Republicans. You can't even have a Christmas dinner, especially if somebody gets drinking. You think, Oh Lord, it's not even worth it any more. We've lost families. We've lost friends, all because of the great divide. That's just politics. That's why I always make my joke, "I'm not a Republican or a Democrat. I'm a hypo-crat" – and a hypocrite, because I'm not willing to get marred up in that.

You seem to strive for a politics of acceptance.

That is my politics. When I hear all the stuff that's going on this day and time, I'm not a good enough Christian to pass judgment. That's not my job, anyway. I'm not about trying to do God's business. I'm trying to ask God's help to do mine. I don't know what's right and wrong. I just pray every day that I will learn. I've got lesbians, gays, drag queens, drug addicts, alcoholics, transgenders, everybody in my group of employees or family. I try to find the God light in everybody. Who am I to judge? Believe you me, I have enough trouble with my own life.

But there is a political song very early on on *Rockstar*, World On Fire. Did you feel a responsibility to comment on this moment in history?

Special things come to me because I leave myself open. I watch news in the morning and news at night, and if there's a special show on TV I want to see, I'll look. Otherwise, I just like the quiet. We were done with the album, and that very night, I woke up about two in the morning, just wide awake. I got up, went in the kitchen, made my coffee, and just started thinking on that song. I finished it before daylight, and I called Kent: Kent, we got to call another session.

I felt the need to say something. I don't like making statements, but I just felt like I needed to. A lot of people do listen to what I have to say. You can do the best you can in the moment, hope that something you do might make a small difference. And any difference at all is better than not even trying. It was a social song. People thought it was an anthem about climate change. It's no more about that than the problems of the world – the hate, the divide, the not accepting people, famine, hunger, war, all of that. I didn't say Trump, and I didn't say Biden. I just said, "Greedy politicians, present and past/ Wouldn't know the truth if it bit 'em in the ass."

You've been asked if you're a feminist so many times, and you're tired of that. But after you left Porter's show, it became an important moment of empowerment for women. You said, essentially, "I deserve my own space."

Yeah, you're right. I had always dreamed of a show of my own. I'd always dreamed of being my own star. I had never in a million years thought about being just a girl singer in somebody else's band. I kept trying to tell Porter, "I need a little freedom. If I'm going to stay here, I need to do this, do that." Oh Lord, everything I said was a big fight.

It was the hardest thing I ever did because it was scary, the leaving and the going. Everybody was saying, "You're making a big mistake. You're one of the best, hottest girl singers in the business, and if you leave Porter, you're not likely to do well." I wasn't afraid of my future because I truly believed I had one. But it was the going, having to hurt people that have helped you. Through my intuition and prayer and faith in myself, that's where I got the courage to do it. My first million-selling record [1976's Here You Come Again] was after I left Porter's show, after I went ahead and took on new management, did all the things I felt I needed to do. I've just been going ever since.

We still live in a world where women are fighting for equal pay, let alone respect. Are you proud that women particularly can turn to you for that example?

Absolutely. I kept asking for a raise, but the whole time I was with Porter, the whole seven years I stayed, my salary never changed. Porter justified it by the fact that I was making royalties, publishing my songs. He made every excuse. Porter would buy me gifts and publicise the fact he'd got me gifts, when I kept saying, Why don't you just treat me fair? I was never going to be any more than what I was, Porter Wagoner's girl singer. I didn't want to make as much money as him. It was his show. I don't care if you're a man or a woman or whatever your colour or your religion: if you do the work, you should be paid for it. It's not about anything other than your work.

You're one of the most prolific songwriters ever, regardless of genre. Right now, what's the lyric you're proudest of?

One that I remember the very moment I wrote, when I was working on [1980 movie] 9 To 5, was "Pour myself a cup of ambition." I went, Yeah, that's so good. That has really followed me all through the years. I may even start my own Starbucks type of coffee-and-tea shop – Cup Of Ambition.

What do you remember about that moment?

I was in LA. I would watch things going on on the set. At night, I would go back to the Hotel Bel-Air. I would get my guitar, and I would start putting pieces together. I would work on songs, clicking my nails on a typewriter. I had just made myself some coffee, because I was going to spend two or three hours working on the song. I always drink coffee when I write. And I just remember saying, Tumble out of bed, and stumble to the kitchen. What else you doing? I looked at my coffee cup and thought, I pour myself a cup of ambition.

Sometimes when those lines come, you just think, Oh my goodness, that is so good. I'm so proud of myself. And then of course, me being spiritual-based, I always look up and say, Hey, thank you, Lord. I like that one.

HELLO DOLLY

Three more key collabs in the Parton portfolio, by **Grayson Haver Currin**.

THE REPUTATION MAKER

Porter Wagoner And Dolly Parton

★★★★

Porter 'N' Dolly

(RCA VICTOR, 1974)

Country showman Wagoner gave Parton her big break, putting her in front of massive TV and record-buying crowds. His voice represented a golden country mean but she was always distinct, apparent on one of their final but best records together. Hear her quiver on Please Don't Stop Loving Me, perfectly framing the tenuous hope of a new relationship. She is even more convincing on Sixteen Years, a sharp snapshot of rural displacement.

THE TRIPLE THREAT

Dolly Parton, Linda Ronstadt And Emmylou Harris

★★★★

Trio

(WARNER BROS, 1987)

A late-'80s supergroup of country stars beyond 40 seems like a plan for an ego-driven quest for continued relevance, slickened by the sounds of the moment. But Parton, Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt stay shockingly true *and* selfless during the first of their stirring *Trio* records, keeping largely acoustic for songs of love, trust and loss. Despite their distinctive tones, they make mighty harmonisers.

THE ROOTS REVIVAL

Dolly Parton

★★★★

The Grass Is Blue

(SUGAR HILL, 1999)

For decades Parton flitted around bluegrass, a genre embedded in her native edge of Appalachia. But she didn't step fully into the fiddle-and-banjo fold until this set, powered by aces including mandolinist Sam Bush and dobro player Jerry Douglas. Parton is a natural, mischievous and soaring during Cash On The Barrelhead and spectrally blue during I Still Miss Someone. The a cappella exit, I Am Ready, is pure backcountry gospel power.

Courtesy of Dolly Parton

On fire: Jaime Robbie Robertson of The Band, during sessions for *Music From Big Pink*, A&R Recording, New York, 1968.

ROBBIE ROBERTSON: 1943-2023

ACROSS THE GREAT DIVIDE

ROBBIE ROBERTSON was an artist who bridged spheres: between roots and rock, sound and vision, Canada and the States, techno and his Native American heritage... His work with Dylan and The Band will stand for the ages, but his polymathic probing produced deeply fascinating work throughout his life. "He had a presence that felt totally fearless," discovers **GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN**.

Portrait by **ELLIOTT LANDY**

ROBBIE ROBERTSON WAS NOT MEANT TO SING, at least not very much.

In 1991, around the time Robertson released his second solo album at the age of 48, the soulful and New Orleans-anchored *Storyville*, a laryngologist told him that his vocal cords were preternaturally thick. They would wear out quickly in spates of upcoming rehearsals for Saturday Night Live and dates promoting the record. Robertson could often grow hoarse.

"'You're not really built to sing constantly,'" Jared Levine remembers the doctor telling Robertson, who had recently enlisted Levine as an enthusiastic young manager. He kept that post for more than three decades, until Robertson died in August, a month after turning 80. "But he couldn't help himself from at least *trying* to sing in rehearsals, because ➢

© Elliott Landy/Magnum Photos

we weren't reading music. People wouldn't know where they were unless Robbie was singing the song."

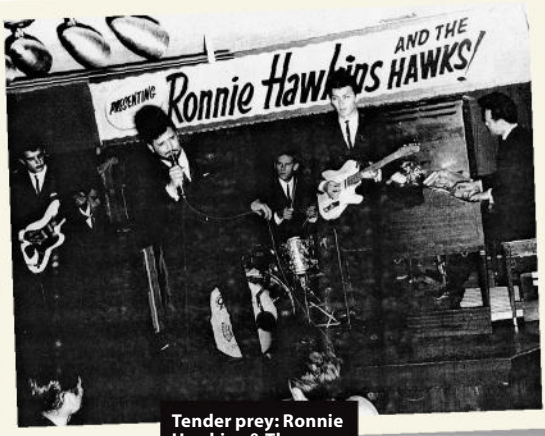
For the first 16 years of his career, Robertson didn't really need to sing much at all. As rock's first wave crested at the end of the '50s, the Toronto teenager headed to Arkansas to enlist in The Hawks, the firebrand band of barnstorming Southern belter Ronnie Hawkins. He soon morphed from steady bassist to high wire guitarist, his under-age chops becoming a calling card of the hard-touring crew.

He didn't need to sing when he left Hawkins five years later, either. The Hawks had become an unwitting magnet for three musicians who would soon emerge as rock's most distinctive vocal triumvirate. There was drummer Levon Helm, whose Deep South cool seemed effortless. There was pianist Richard Manuel, whose fractured falsetto seemed to convey the weight of the entire world. And there was bassist Rick Danko, whose weird and loping soul cadences bounced wildly, like a rubber ball in a gravel parking lot.

"The Band were trying to do a type of timeless music. We were thinking, hopefully, you could listen to this in 20 years or 50 years."
ROBBIE ROBERTSON

Alongside psychedelic keyboard scientist Garth Hudson, the quintet remained The Hawks for Bob Dylan and then became, for themselves, The Band. Over a decade, Robertson wrote many of their standards – The Weight, The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down, Acadian Driftwood – and became a singular guitarist, his pinched harmonics and elliptical phrases suggesting a lurid Picasso portrait of 'proper' rock guitar. Aside from the occasional tune or especially rich harmony, he rarely needed to step to the microphone.

"We weren't a group with a cute lead singer who liked to take his shirt off, and his guitar man, who also liked being shirtless on occasion," Robertson wrote in his 2016 memoir Testimony, a frank study of his first three decades and The Band's slow rise and heartbreaking fall. "We were holding a different hand – like five-card stud. Nothing wild. Everything face up."



Tender prey: Ronnie Hawkins & The Hawks (Robertson is second right), Hamilton, ON, 1963.

The Band splintered in 1976, less than a decade after writing their staggering debut, *Music From Big Pink*, in the basement of the pastel headquarters they came to share with Dylan in New York's Catskill Mountains. Drugs and fame had crashed with their own creative freight, fulfilling the foreboding name of their landmark farewell concert of November '76, The Last Waltz.

Robertson, however, didn't stop. Though he would never again reach The Band's cultural zenith, his work after that flagship never flagged, slyly shaping one of the richest creative lives of any rock star to survive the '70s. He made movies with Martin Scorsese and helped run an enterprising record label – the nascent DreamWorks – out to re-order the industry. He played on a Ryuichi Sakamoto record and wrote a children's book mining his indigenous Canadian heritage. He became the voice of Mercedes-Benz, plotted a Cirque Du Soleil show that never happened, and, like Dylan, ventured to paint his own album covers.

Robertson tended to The Band's legacy, too, starring in Once Were Brothers, a 2019 documentary about their saga, and overseeing troves of definitive reissues, remasters, and expanded editions. Meanwhile, there were a half-dozen prescient and polyglot solo albums. He'd even finished a second book – about his life after The Band – just before his death, and it's planned for release next year.

"What you run into in Hollywood a lot is creative activity run by committee, and people are scared to say what they really feel because others might not agree," says Mark Graham, who served as the arranger and conductor for Robertson's final work, the score for the new Scorsese film Killers Of The Flower Moon. "But Robbie was very precise about what he liked and what he didn't like. He had a definite point of view, a vision, whether you liked it or not."

WHEN HE WAS NINE, ROBERTSON told his mother Dolly he wanted to be a storyteller. He spotted a thread through the music he loved and the tales he heard on Canada's sprawling Six Nations Indian Reserve, where his mother was born. "I think you will," she replied.

More than four decades later, Robertson was working with the British multi-instrumentalist and music producer Marius de Vries. They sat for weeks at a desk in Los Angeles, passing ideas back and forth. But de Vries most vividly recalls the meals they ate together, typically at a good table in an excellent Hollywood restaurant where the *maître d'* always knew Robertson's name. That's when the stories would start.

"Anyone who knew him even for a minute would realise he was one of the world's best storytellers, with the speaking voice to back it up. He was a magnetic conversationalist," recalls de Vries. "He was a man who experienced so much, and he would bring history to life over dinner."

Robertson's life had indeed been remarkable. Born Jaime Royal Robertson, he was raised on the suburban edges of Toronto, believing himself the child of Dolly and Jim Robertson, a World War II veteran. His parents were fiery, prone to carouses and fights – one of which erupted into one of the first shocks of Robertson's life: discovering his biological father was Alex Klegerman, a small-time Jewish gangster and son of a bootlegger. He'd been killed in a hit-and-run accident and never met his son.

Still, after the revelation, Klegerman's family accepted their new nephew, indoctrinating him in Toronto's criminal underworld in ways that sometimes bordered on real danger. And this was just the city side of Robertson's family. At Six Nations, he would romp through the woods and along the riverside with cousins before listening to his elders play guitars, maybe a mandolin or violin.

"The sound, the rhythm, the fingers on the strings, the voices blending together in unison and then slipping into harmonies," he wrote of his acoustic indoctrination at eight. "My uncles and cousins were so lost in the music that it mesmerised me."

When he left Toronto as a teen to enlist with Hawkins, he joined a relentless band churning on the margins of success, scraping by as they crisscrossed North America in Hawkins' big Cadillac. The experiences were uncanny: He once helped Hawkins scout songs in the Brill Building, trying to play it cool as Leiber and Stoller auditioned new material for him. He and Danko pulled an all-nighter to guard the Hawks' gear in a Texas nightclub, nearly shooting police dogs in the process. (The club belonged to future Lee Harvey Oswald assassin Jack Ruby.) He and Helm stole Paul Butterfield's stash after Mike Bloomfield led them on a blues tour of Chicago that involved sitting at the feet of Muddy Waters for a set.

Getty (3). Provided by Chicago Review Press from the book This Wheel's on Fire by Levon Helm. © Elliott Landy/Magnum Photos

On the Hudson line: The Band (from left) Rick Danko, Levon Helm, Robbie Robertson, Richard Manuel, Garth Hudson, outside Danko's home in Zena Road, Woodstock, NY, 1969; (below) on the Ed Sullivan Show, November 2, 1969; (right) Robertson, June 1971; (opposite page, top) Robertson, December 1969.

While for many musicians, the road life was a means to an end, Robertson revelled in it. "I didn't know that I was storing up stuff for songs," he would reflect. "I liked the whole poetry of the thing, the romanticism."

ROBERTSON'S RUN WITH HAWKINS PROVIDED HIM and the rest of The Hawks a paying lesson in perfection and versatility. Hawkins was a shouting, sweating, swearing showman, but he was serious about a band that was tight. They would often practise *after* their gigs ended, trying out new slabs of primitive rock or hard-driving soul. "Ron was not known to be shy about making his band rehearse relentlessly," Robertson wrote. "I couldn't have been happier."

But they learned resolve – and a lot about the possibility of rock as art, not just entertainment – from their next gig: as Bob Dylan's backing band for his fractious first string of electric shows, in 1966. They were there in Manchester when Dylan was heckled as Judas, there when they could feel vitriol emanating from the Royal Albert Hall audience. The scene was so tense that Helm, who had been The Hawks' anchor for so long, left to work on an oil rig.

Robertson, however, was committed, his mind expanded by encounters with Allen Ginsberg, Edie Sedgwick, and David Crosby. He began buying and reading screenplays at a New York bookstore, leading him to consider the storytelling scope and stakes of a song. Having never mixed an album before, he mixed *Blonde On Blonde* for stereo at Dylan's behest, goading the engineer to stay awake by shouting in his ear.

And after Dylan crashed his motorcycle, he began to meet him in Woodstock, eventually encouraging the remaining Hawks to join him nearby, using their rented pink-painted ranch house as a musical retreat. Only then, in the mellow mode of song swapping and goofy jams that yielded *The Basement Tapes*, did they lure Helm back into the fold. And only then, of course, did they become The Band.

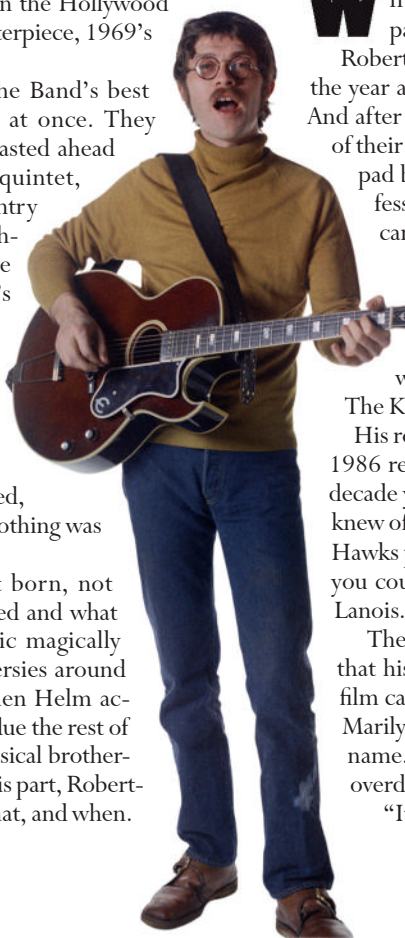
"We were trying to do a type of timeless music," Robertson said of their salad days in a 1982 interview. "We were thinking, hopefully, you could listen to this in 20 years or 50 years."

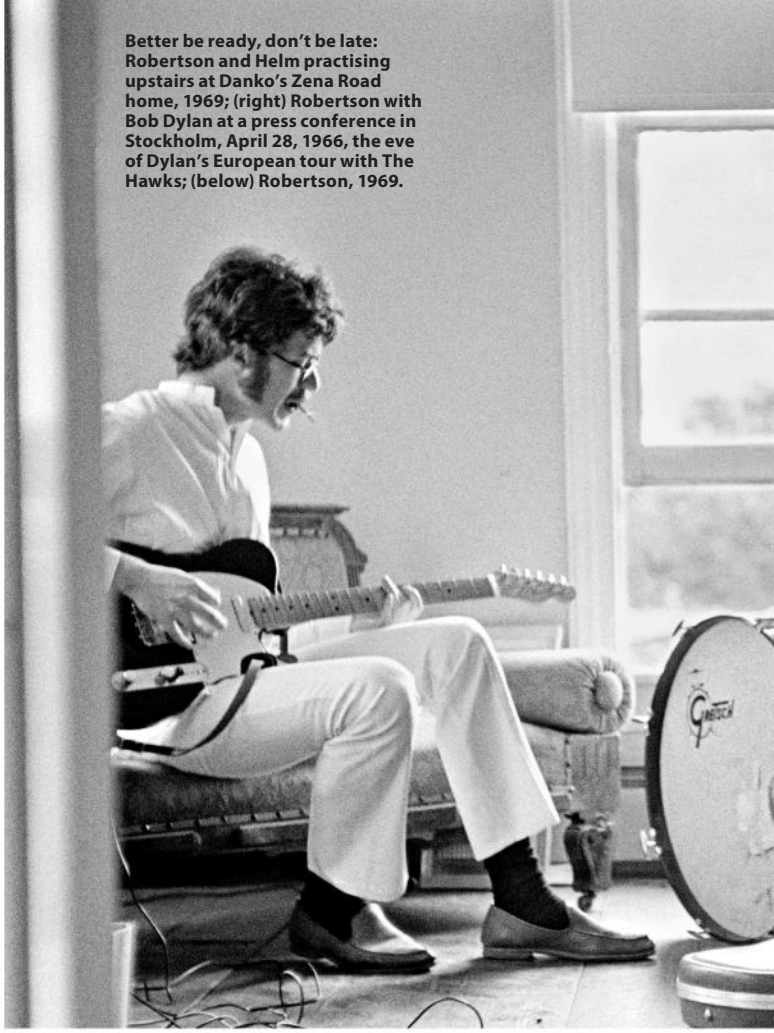
From the start, though, The Band's music existed on its own bleeding edge. They bucked studio equipment conventions while recording their 1968 debut album, *Music From Big Pink*, taking down the baffles so they could see and hear each other playing, as if they were back in the basement. They built their own studio in the poolhouse of Sammy Davis Jr's property in the Hollywood Hills to make their second consecutive masterpiece, 1969's *The Band*. A sense of possibility presided.

More important, though, was how The Band's best music occupied multiple liminal spaces at once. They had boogied with Ronnie Hawkins and blasted ahead belligerently with Bob Dylan, but, as a quintet, they could settle into sweet gospel or country atmospheres, then drive deep into Southern funk. There were predictive new wave cuts, warped Zydeco hymns, and Hudson's disarming electronic explorations, all contained in a single album.

Meanwhile, Robertson's lyrics reflected not only the scripts he'd been devouring but an elliptical quality he'd no doubt learned from Dylan. His songs often posed more questions than they answered, with some ineffable hook suggesting that nothing was especially complicated.

To listeners, the best Band songs felt born, not made, the line between what was composed and what sprang from the group's musical dynamic magically blurred. That quality would feed controversies around writing credits further down the line, when Helm accused Robertson of monopolising monies due the rest of the group, tragically souring the idea of musical brotherhood which The Band had embodied. For his part, Robertson was always clear on who contributed what, and when.





Better be ready, don't be late: Robertson and Helm practising upstairs at Danko's Zena Road home, 1969; (right) Robertson with Bob Dylan at a press conference in Stockholm, April 28, 1966, the eve of Dylan's European tour with The Hawks; (below) Robertson, 1969.

"There was never one discussion between the guys in the band about me not writing the songs," he told MOJO in 2016. "That would have been preposterous. I worked my ass off and they knew what I did and came to me and apologised for not holding up their end in that area. [Levon] made statements years after The Band that were just blatantly unfounded. It broke my heart."

WHEN ROBERTSON SCOOPED DANIEL LANOIS from a Los Angeles hotel in 1986, nearly a decade had passed since The Band's Dionysian farewell.

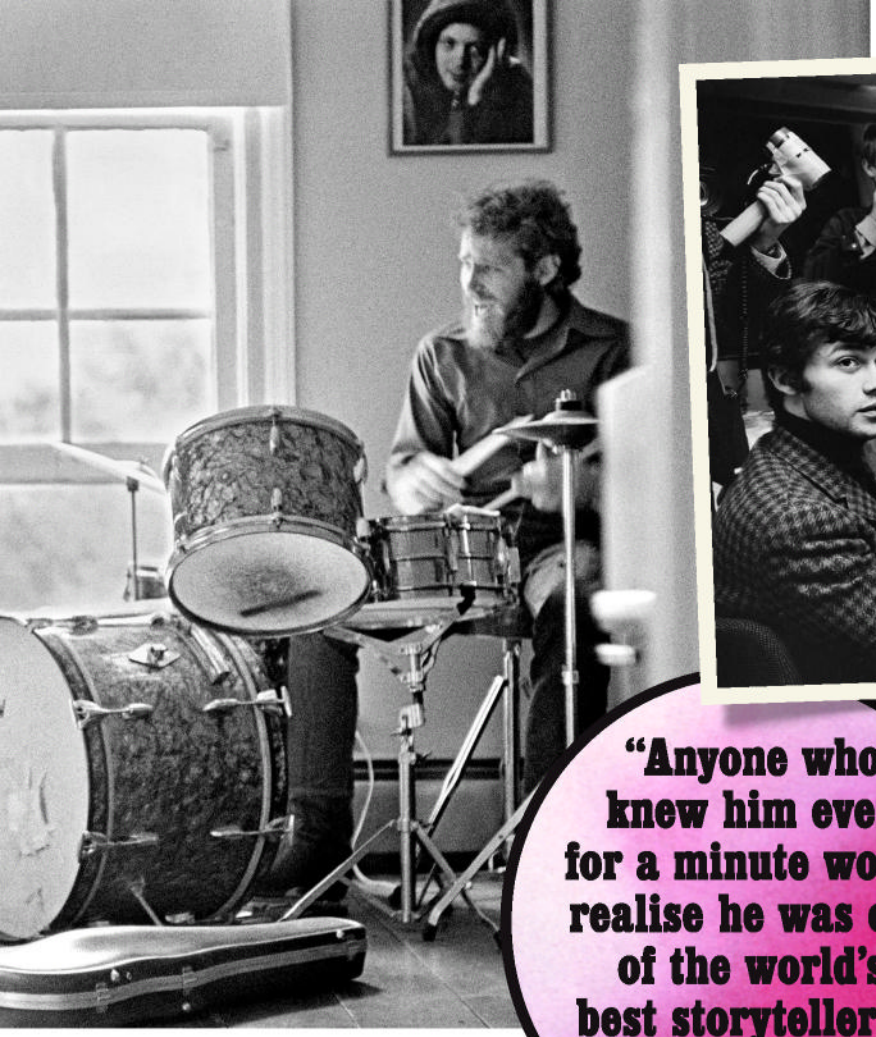
Robertson had certainly been busy in the interim. There was the year and a half spent bringing The Last Waltz to the screen. And after he and director Scorsese found themselves kicked out of their respective homes in the late '70s, they became bachelor pad buddies for a while, galvanising their personal and professional relationship. Tapping his experience working at a carnival as a kid and his family associations with Toronto gangsters, Robertson starred alongside Jodie Foster in Robert Kaylor's 1980 movie Carny, playing the part of the travelling show's financial fixer. Robertson had also worked on the music for Scorsese's Raging Bull and The King Of Comedy.

His rock star phase seemed over, however, by the time of that 1986 rendezvous, while Lanois was the emerging renegade. A decade younger than Robertson and also from Ontario, he first knew of Robertson as Hawkins' radical guitar slinger, since The Hawks played Canada so often. "There was a rock'n'roll school you could go to, and it was the Ronnie Hawkins show," says Lanois. "He *always* had a hot guitar player with him."

The pair headed to Robertson's studio, where he explained that his new project would be multimedia – an album and a film called American Roulette, unspooling from a song about Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, and James Dean of the same name. He played Lanois the frontrunners for his ostensibly overdue debut solo LP.

"It felt as though Robbie had more in him than what I

© Elliott Landy/Magnum Photos, Alamy



"Anyone who knew him even for a minute would realise he was one of the world's best storytellers."
MARIUS DE VRIES

heard. I felt like there must be life beyond this 'American Roulette'," remembers Lanois. "As specific as it was, I didn't think it was enough to fully expose my new friend. I wanted to have a record that was about his soul, why he was doing what he was doing."

Lanois asked him about the early times he'd left Canada to venture into the Deep South, especially alongside Helm. What had it been like to meet his family? What had it been like to play with Sonny Boy Williamson, as the quintet had done after tracking the harmonica man down in Arkansas?

Robertson began to describe the whole scene beautifully: the heat, the music, the mystery. They found a melody they both liked, almost like a music box, and Robertson left. Lanois had been recording. He edited the soliloquy, connecting sequenced snippets over wafting chords from a Suzuki Omnichord that his brother, Bob, had modified.

"Robbie came in the next day, and I played it for him: 'Daniel, I will never doubt you again,'" says Lanois, chuckling slyly. "So here we have just the two of us Canadians, with something coming out of the speakers that was *fascinating*."

That song, Somewhere Down The Crazy River, revealed *terra incognita* to Robertson, and he was willing to explore it on what became the *Robbie Robertson* album, released in 1987. "All of a sudden, I had this yearning. I had this need," he told Rolling Stone of that era. "I felt angry. I felt possessed. It was all very instinctual, like breeding time."

The pair ventured to Europe, recording the songs Sweet Fire Of Love and Testimony with U2. Peter Gabriel added keyboards and vocals. Back in the States, Lanois recruited another Hawks guitar alumnus, Bill Dillon, to come play. They put him in his own recording booth with a dedicated espresso machine, encouraging him to spool through ideas for hours.

Lanois and Robertson were together when the news arrived that Manuel had hanged himself in a motel bathroom in Florida. "It was very sad," Lanois remembers, sighing. "There was a little bit of a feeling in the air – 'Can you believe it? Richard finally did it.'"

Robertson pieced together a keening hook and drifting chords, but they weren't sure where to go next, if anywhere. Lanois asked bass maven Tony Levin to listen and jam along to the chords and beat. When they found a phrase they liked, Levin walked his way through it again and again, forming an iterative electric latticework. (Levin wasn't credited on the session for this song, Fallen Angel, but Lanois insists it was him.) Robertson strained as he sang of empty endings and wishful thinking, nodding lyrically to Dylan and Manuel's Tears Of Rage and Canadian landscapes. Garth Hudson later added organ, a bedrock of support for his old friend.

Robertson was stunned by what they could create from "a simple little folk song," as he put it, an elegy for a fallen friend.

FOR THREE DECADES, ROBERTSON HAD INCLUDED hints of his native heritage in select songs. There were the mystical symbols of The Band's Caledonia Mission, named in part for an Ontario town that Six Nations claimed as its land. Much the same was true for the *Robbie Robertson* song, Broken Arrow, which borrowed its name from a Muscogee settlement in what is now Oklahoma, following the forced displacement of Native Americans in the mid 19th century, via the Trail Of Tears. These were guarded references at best.

Robertson had, however, been acquiring Native American music for years, compiling archival field recordings from the Library Of Congress and seeking out labels that issued new stuff. "He was always curious, a collector of what he thought was cool in the world," says Levine of Robertson's broader magpie compulsions, the acquisition of classic guitars and the filling of notebooks with curious phrases. "He would write it down or keep it with him and say, 'Yeah, I have to find a way to use that sometime.'"

That opportunity to explore his ethnic roots more explicitly came in the early '90s, soon after Robertson released his second solo album, *Storyville*. He was floored when a team of filmmakers asked him to shape the music for a series of documentaries about indigenous Americans. The evocative outcome, 1994's *Music For The Native Americans*, became a springboard for something even more audacious – experimental electronic music that repurposed those very sounds, pulling them into the late 20th century.

"He knew that, now that he'd talked about this music, he didn't have to be so subtle," says Levine. "He could do something that married the music he was interested in right then with native music he was hearing and enjoying."

Robertson rang de Vries, who had recently worked on ➢

ROBERTSON'S JAMS

Fifteen Robbie landmarks – as tunesmith, guitarist, lyricist and, occasionally, even singer.

Have guitar, will travel: Robbie runs riot with Bo.

Who Do You Love?

(Roulette single, 1963)

Robertson was three years into his lead guitar tenure with Ronnie Hawkins – and still just 19 – when he ran riot across this Bo Diddley cover, spearing The Hawks' frantic gallop with thrilling precision-slalom runs and stiletto-treble sustain. And this was nearly a two-guitar shootout: Roy Buchanan, who played with Ronnie's cousin Dale, was on the session – alas, on bass. *DF*

The Stones I Throw (Will Free All Men)

(ATCO single, 1965)

Recorded as Levon And The Hawks, this spiritual Robertson melody and Civil Rights-boostering lyric create a bridge between The Hawks' Ronnie Hawkins days and The Band, already digging backwards to re-imagine the Great American Songbook. Even the thrown away B-side, He Don't Love You (And He'll Break Your Heart) is a minor Northern soul classic. *AF*

I Don't Believe You (She Acts Like We Never Have Met)

(from Live 1966: The Bootleg Series Vol. 4, 1998)

What had begun as a solo acoustic song on *Another Side Of Bob Dylan* was transformed by Bob and The Hawks into a churning electric rocker. By turning the original verses' chord changes into an irresistibly catchy lead guitar riff repeated throughout, Robertson was responsible for ramping up the power and intensity. "Play fucking loud," indeed. *MSi*

To Kingdom Come

(from Music From Big Pink, 1968)

Dylan long drew on the portentous resonance of the Bible, often just to tease; so too his disciple Robbie Robertson on The Band's debut LP. Here Robertson suggests hidden meanings aplenty, takes a very rare lead vocal, and also unleashes …*Big Pink*'s only guitar solo, its Cropper-esque bite contrasting with his more customary Curtis Mayfield-style fills. *MS*

The Weight

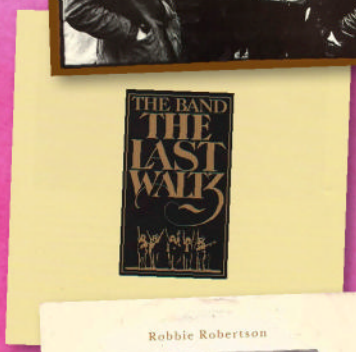
(from Music From Big Pink, 1968)

The autodidactic Robertson was inspired by surrealist filmmaker Luis Buñuel's theme of "the impossibility of sainthood" as the protagonist attempts and fails at a series of good deeds. The element of The Band that's often overlooked is the dreamlike air of mystery that's shot through their work – this cryptic classic being an ageless example. *MSi*

The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down

(from The Band, 1969)

Robertson talked about writing songs as if he was making movies. The tale of Tennessean Virgil Caine in the last days of the Civil War, from The Band's second album, certainly feels like one. The Canadian channelled the musical milieux of the 19th century US; *echt* Southerner Levon Helm sang it and helped with research. Much-covered – Johnny Cash, Allman Brothers, Black Crowes et al – it brought Joan Baez a Top 3 hit. *SS*



King Harvest (Has Surely Come)

(from The Band, 1969)

An ever-unfolding canvas of rural America on the edge of ruin, rattling along on bassist Danko's funky undercarriage and jewelled with delightful duels: Helm and Manuel's gruff vs plaintive vocal trade-off; Robertson's stinging guitar vs Hudson's ethereal organ. Watch the live-in-a-studio version on YouTube and marvel at the ensemble's psychic meld. *DE*

Whispering Pines

(from The Band, 1969)

Band pianist Richard Manuel wrote the melody of this mournful beauty; Robertson wrote lyrics, thinking "Richard could break your heart if he sings these words." It worked. The combination of the intense loss and loneliness in Manuel's voice and Robertson's crying seagulls, foghorn and empty house in a cold, cold sun places this among The Band's most poignant. SS

Life Is A Carnival

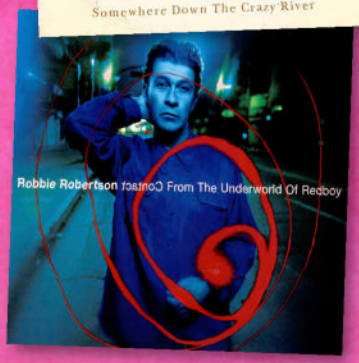
(*from Cahoots*, 1971)

The opening track of The Band's fourth album swarms with con men, sideshows, peddlers and tacky souvenirs – not unlike America generally, Robertson seems to imply. But there's a big heap of life and humanity in this warm, funky Mardi Gras of a song he co-wrote with Rick Danko and Levon Helm, and the Allen Toussaint horn arrangements are pure joy. *SS*

The Moon Struck One

(from Cahoots, 1971)

Inspired by the star-crossed triangle in Francois Truffaut's 1962 film Jules Et Jim, Robertson's greatest love song was magnificently scored tragedy: the sudden loss and shattered innocence vividly carried by Richard Manuel's heartbroken vocal and Garth Hudson's memorial-service organ. There would have been more horns too, arranged by Gil Evans, but he didn't finish the charts in time. *DF*



Acadian Driftwood

(from Northern Lights – Southern Cross, 1975)

From The Band's sixth studio album: Robertson's sweeping epic about 18th century French settlers expelled from Canada by the British, forced to become desperate refugees in Louisiana. While Robertson employed factual licence, the song is essentially true to Cajun history and, like The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down, it's a heartbreaking ode of empathy. *MSi*

Further On Up The Road

(from The Last Waltz, 1978)

Guesting on the Bobby Bland blues shuffle at The Band's 1976 farewell concert, early Band convert Eric Clapton's guitar strap unhitched, so Robertson on rhythm (and cocaine) jumped in to take the lead, his unscripted but inspired fire of pinched harmonics prompting God himself to raise his game as they trade jam-hot licks. *MS*

Somewhere Down The Crazy River

(Geffen single, 1987)

Produced by Daniel Lanois; a melody played on an Omnichord; MTV mega-video directed by Martin Scorsese; a middle-aged '60s hero re-inventing himself in the modern world… It's the late-'80s in a nutshell. Robertson wisely made a virtue of his spoken delivery, recalling murky Arkansas nights dynamite fishing with Levon Helm. *AF*

Take Your Partner By The Hand

(Polydor single, 1998)

After watching Howie B DJ on U2's PopMart tour, Robertson rang him up and suggested they collaborate on "something". The result was the final single and only vocal track from the Scottish producer's *Turn The Dark Off* album, sampling The Electric Prunes' Holy Are You and later remixed by Gang Starr's DJ Premier. *AF*

Once Were Brothers

(from Sinematic, 2019)

Robertson's theme song for Daniel Roher's 2019 Band doc (irritatingly subtitled 'Robbie Robertson And The Band') faces the fact that the group's bond had dissolved in bitterness long before the Grim Reaper got busy ("You know deep inside/There's no goin' back"). Drums like gunshots and Frédéric Yonnet's elegiac harmonica emphasise the finality. *DE*

By Danny Eccleston, David Fricke, Andy Fyfe, Michael Simmons, Sylvie Simmons, Mat Snow.

American roulette: (clockwise from left) Robertson in 1987; with collaborator and friend Martin Scorsese, 1988; with Garth Hudson for The Band's induction to Canada's Walk Of Fame, 2014; Robertson is made an Officer of the Order of Canada, 2011.

"He was always curious, a collector of what he thought was cool in the world."
JARED LEVINE

records by Björk, Massive Attack, and Madonna. Robertson especially admired his work on the score for Baz Luhrmann's 1996 movie, Romeo + Juliet. A week later, a briefcase of DATs of Native American music arrived unannounced at de Vries' home. Robertson told him to listen and see if any ideas came to mind, any sounds they might turn into songs.

"He asked how I was getting along, and I said it was very interesting stuff. But I was not quite sure what he was aiming to do," remembers de Vries. "He said, 'Well, that's what we're trying to find out.' He sent me a plane ticket."

Howie B, the Scottish producer who had worked with Tricky, Björk and U2, joined the team, and on the resulting *Contact From The Underworld Of Redboy* (1998) Robertson fully stepped from the shadows of roots rock into dimly lit trip-hop and sample-based soul. "Robbie never lost his curiosity, always wanted to know what was new, who was new," says de Vries. "We spent as much time talking about techno and electronic music as we did free jazz. There didn't seem to be any genre he wasn't curious about."

There was an unabashedly political and even controversial edge to . . . *Redboy*, too, with a sobering interview with imprisoned Native American activist Leonard Peltier winding through loping drums. Narratives of native struggle and power were integral. "He was trying to change the perception in the popular world that Native American culture is stuck in the past," says Levine. "He didn't see it that way, and he wanted to show it."

PETER BRADLEY ADAMS DIDN'T UNDERSTAND when, in 2001, his manager said Robbie Robertson wanted to meet about a record deal. "I assumed he didn't mean 'Robbie Robertson'," says Adams, laughing, "because Robbie Robertson would never have a desk job."

Robertson didn't *exactly* have a desk job at DreamWorks Records. The vision of a consortium of marquee entertainment power brokers, including Robertson's longtime friend David Geffen, DreamWorks was designed as a kind of cross-discipline playground, where film, animation, and music could commingle. They invited Robertson to "come have some fun with us", as he once told journalist Dean Goodman, from helming soundtracks to scouting young acts. He loved this new excuse to explore: "A big part of what keeps my wheels turning is the challenge of something," he continued, "and learning something in the process."

The demos Adams had made with his duo, Eastmountainsouth, floored Robertson, especially their arcing and aspirational take on the Stephen Foster lament Hard Times. Adams' harmonies with Kat Maslich moved in a way that suggested siblings, with all the tension and trust that entails. Robertson closed his eyes and smiled as Adams played him new music, then summoned Lenny Waronker. They made a deal on the spot, but Robertson had a caveat: "I don't want anybody putting you in the alt-country room, and that's coming from the guy that invented alt-country."

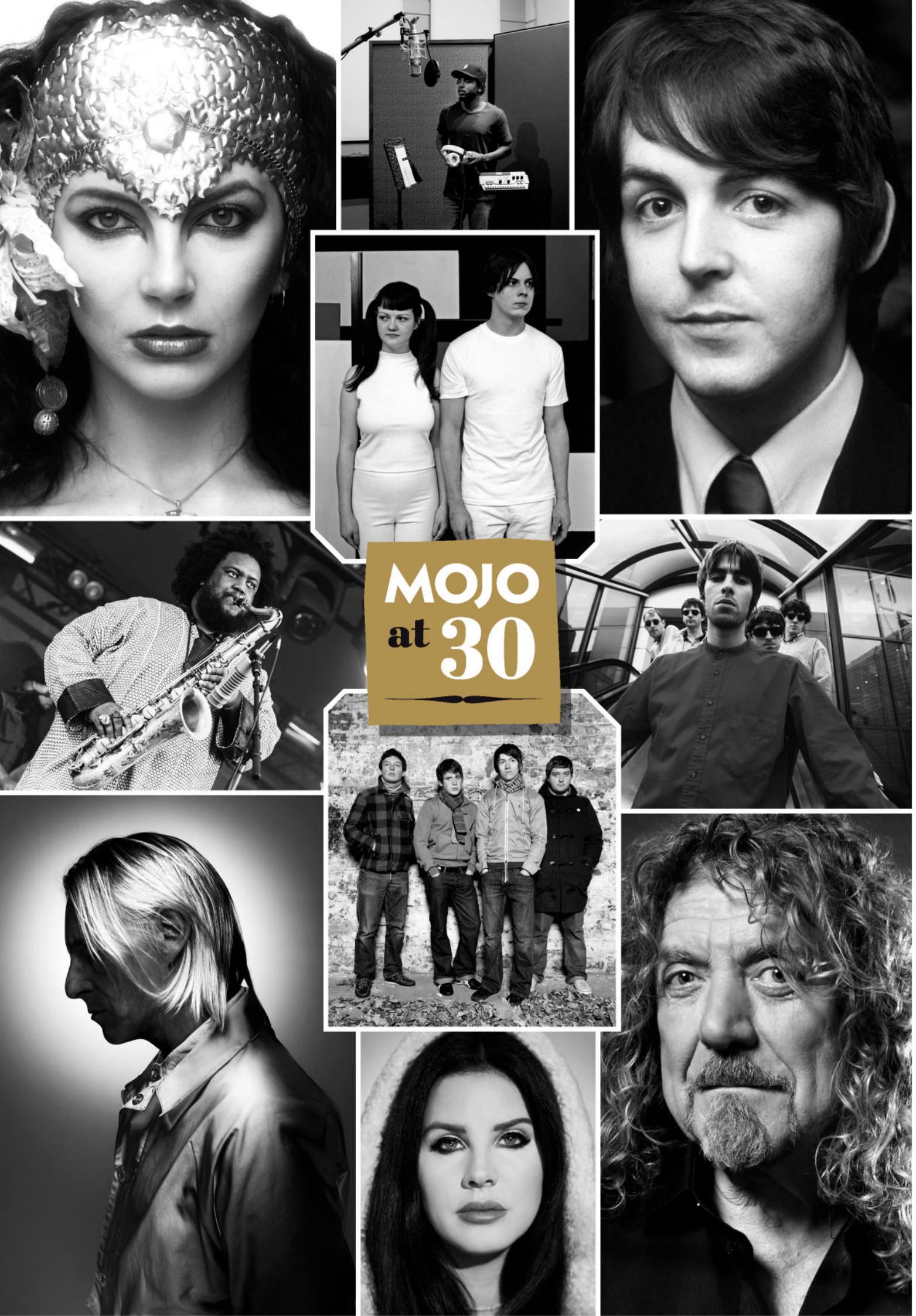
Indeed, Adams was not just a fan of The Band but also Lanois' work with Robertson and, later, Dylan and Willie Nelson. Robertson even asked Lanois to produce Eastmountainsouth's debut, though he passed. Still, Eastmountainsouth's first and only album was an exquisite study in Southern harmony, with songs that hinged on religious iconography and perseverance. It felt like it arrived and left on a breeze, scattering it beyond alt-country origins. Robertson loved that defiance.

"He had a presence that felt totally fearless, like he just didn't give a fuck with anyone," says Adams. "Those people are rare, and maybe that could have been interpreted as coldness or ego. But it was great to be in a room with someone like that."

That spirit, it turns out, was affirming for Lanois, too, even if it took work to find it after Robertson went so long without making a record, without really using his voice. They got there, though.

"He inspired me beyond the guitar or what he *did*," Lanois says. "What inspired me was his capacity to be curious – and to do something about it. That's my kind of trailblazer."

AJ Barratt, Camera Press/Lynn Goldsmith, Getty, Eyevine (2)

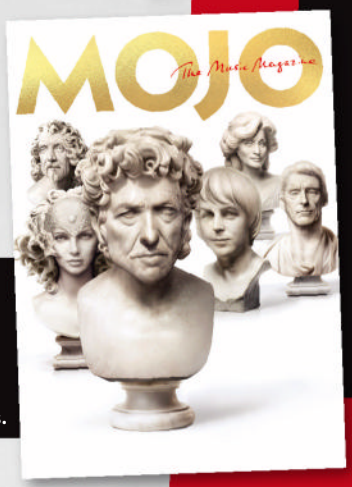

MOJO
at 30

SOUNDTRACK OF OUR LIFE

The Best of MOJO's First 30 Years

Legends and divas, prophets and pioneers, lovers and fighters: MOJO magazine's 30th birthday is a time to celebrate the pantheon of artists (and their works) that have won our hearts and blown our minds since 1993. Turn, then, for 30 stories from 30 years in 30 pages: happy and sad, quiet and loud, rock and roll, all of them monuments to music's vast scope and potential for transcendence. That's what we call a party...

STARRING:
The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Kate Bush, Paul Weller, Robert Plant, Jack White, Kendrick Lamar, Arctic Monkeys, Lana Del Rey, Oasis, Kamasi Washington and more!



A monumental MOJO line-up, featuring (clockwise from above): Bob Dylan, Robert Plant, Lana Del Rey, Paul Weller, Kamasi Washington, Kate Bush, Kendrick Lamar, Paul McCartney, Oasis, Arctic Monkeys and The White Stripes.

Getty (4), Eyevine, Evolf, Camera Press, Kevin Westenberg, Charlie Grant

1993

Ready For The Country

As MOJO#1 drew nigh, PAUL WELLER unveiled his own fusion of music's past and present. "It was like a wonderland," he says of making *Wild Wood*.

IN THE EARLY '90s, AFTER MORE THAN A DECADE spent living in London, Paul Weller began returning to his native Woking, drawn to many of his childhood and teenage haunts in the surrounding Surrey countryside.

"I don't know what drove me to do that," he reflects today, sipping a coffee and puffing on a fag at a table outside a Maida Vale café. "I just reconnected with a lot of places around there. I realised how long it'd been since I'd thought about those days. I'd been on this mad journey and gone totally somewhere else."

Weller had only turned 35 in the spring of 1993, but he was already regarded as something of an elder statesman of rock, or even written off by some as yesterday's man. "I felt old because I'd already done so much," he reasons. "I'd gone through that whole experience with The Jam, and then The Style Council. And then nothing. And then I was almost starting again and trying to build this thing back up and find my mojo, y'know. Get it back on track, man. Enjoy writing again. Enjoy playing again."

"The press were saying, 'He's finished.' I was like, 'Really? We'll fucking see about that.'"

It was a process that had begun with his self-titled 1992 solo debut, with its blend of modishly looped-groove rock songs (Into Tomorrow) and trippy, soulful ballads (Above The Clouds). Wandering back through the green spaces of his past, he found bucolic inspiration for what was to become his landmark second solo album, *Wild Wood*.

"There was kind of an Englishness and a folkiness about some of Paul's writing at that time," says his friend since the '80s, The Blow Monkeys' singer Robert Howard – AKA Dr. Robert – who remembers Weller giving him a copy of Donovan's 1967 double album *A Gift From A Flower To A Garden*. "The acoustics came out again and we would play those songs together, like Wear Your Love Like Heaven, and analyse them a little bit. I think that was the beginning of what turned out to be *Wild Wood*, for him."

One particular field just outside the Surrey village of Ripley – with "a view to this copse, quite far away," as Weller details – provided the lyrical impetus for Shadow Of The Sun, a song which found its writer looking back at his boyhood dreaming, taking stock and determining to "have it all while I'm still young." It was a track demoed, like many of the others, at the nearby Black Barn Studios, a facility Weller ended up buying in the late '90s, which he still uses as his recording base today.

Lawrence Watson

"I was only thinking of this in recent months actually," he says. "I was looking at it and thinking, That's that same field I wrote that tune about. Now it sort of makes sense because that's where the studio is. Whether that was a sign, I don't know."

"Sometimes, after years of going through all the music business machinations," reasons Dr. Robert, who ended up contributing guitar to *Wild Wood*, "you need to reconnect with the child inside you, and what it was that was first kind of lit. I think there was a lot of that in what Paul was doing. He was feeling energetic and ambitious again."

Back in 1993, by looking to music's past and connecting the threads to music's present (an approach which MOJO magazine also committed to upon its launch), Weller discovered a future for himself, with the folky shades and fiery rock of *Wild Wood* as its blueprint.

"It's quite an inspired record," he states. "There was an excitement going on. It felt like it was building up and going somewhere."

WILD WOOD WAS IN FACT RECORDED IN A different rural location, 64 miles north-west of Ripley and Black Barn, at The Manor in the Oxfordshire village of Shipton-on-Cherwell. The fabled residential studio, owned by Richard Branson and inhabited down the years by such disparate characters as Sandy Denny, Gong, Tangerine Dream, PiL and XTC, was housed in a Grade II-listed 16th century country pile set within sprawling gardens. Its laid-back, pastoral atmosphere was to lend itself to the beatific vibe of the record.

"It was the first time we'd been there," Weller says, "and it was just like a fucking wonderland or something. There was a room in the house where the grand piano was, and we had a [drum] kit and some little amps in there. So, even after the sessions, we'd go on and have a jam."

"We'd be in the dining room, or we'd go on the lawn," remembers Dr. Robert. "Wherever we were, there'd be guitars about, and people would be playing. So it was that pure music vibe. It was a totally immersive experience. You're not going home… you're not breaking the spell."

Elsewhere, in The Manor's living-cum-listening room, records were spun, and cassette mixtapes played into the wee small hours, shaping the contours of the album. Traffic are often cited as the chief source of inspiration for *Wild Wood*. "Definitely an ➢

Don't break the spell: Paul Weller at the door to *Wild Wood*, The Manor, Oxfordshire, 1993.

Push it along: Weller recording *Wild Wood* demos at Black Barn Studios, Surrey, 1993 – "a real learning curve".

"We were all on E's, man! It was in them days. Fucking E's and whizz."

< influence," Weller nods, "but I mean, people were probably saying that because it had a flute on it!

"From the '90s onwards, I was listening to so much different music which I'd cut myself off from in the past. I was sort of blinkered when I was younger. To the point of not buying records because someone had long hair or a beard. I dropped any sort of barriers at all and so it was a real learning curve as well."

Other names on the *Wild Wood* sessions playlists included CSNY, Nick Drake, Free, Donald Byrd, Shuggie Otis and A Tribe Called Quest, whose Luck Of Lucien from their 1990 debut *People's Instinctive Travels And The Paths Of Rhythm* led Weller, via their sample usage, back to jazz-funk trumpeter Billy Brooks's 1974 album, *Windows Of The Mind*.

"They were sampling music that was made in the early '70s," reflects *Wild Wood* co-producer Brendan Lynch. "We were trying to get the same feeling."

If The Beatles had been a Weller staple since his childhood, their chief influence on *Wild Wood* was in his guitar choices, mirroring those used on *Revolver*: Lennon's Epiphone Casino, Harrison's Gibson SG, McCartney's Höfner bass.

"The Casino was used on Sunflower," Lynch recalls. "As soon as Paul played that intro guitar and the drums came in, it just immediately sounded amazing to me in the studio. Once we got that, we really knew we were onto something. Basically, what I heard in the studio when they were playing *was* the record."

Weller and his band – the core of which comprised time-served Style Council drummer Steve White, Young Disciples bassist Marco Nelson and flute/horn player Jacko Peake – were audibly on cracking form. "Paul wanted [the album] to be upfront," says Lynch. "Folky, acoustic, but powerful… really in your face. It was great to see him creatively hitting a new high."

In its Black Barn demo form, the title track of *Wild Wood*, which Weller had envisaged as a "modern-day folk song", was more electric guitar- and beats-driven. At The Manor, it was stripped down into its final form as a slow-burning acoustic ballad.

"It wasn't really working for us," Weller says of the original, "and it might have been Brendan's idea to simplify the whole thing."

"It really worked out," says Lynch. "We tried recording outside first of all, with Paul in the yard at the studio. We had a couple of umbrellas over him to try and stop the wind. It sounded good, but it was unusable because of the elements. So, then it was, 'Let's put him inside,' and we got it in a few takes."

ON *WILD WOOD*, THE ASSURED PERFORMANCES sometimes contrasted with the doubt apparent in the songs' lyrics. Lynch recalls one day when Weller picked up a magazine and read a blisteringly dismissive piece about himself.

"Basically it was one of those articles: 'Paul Weller, where did it all go wrong?'" the producer relates. "He put it down and he went, 'That was a bit harsh.' That's all he said. But quite soon after that, he'd written Has My Fire Really Gone Out?. I thought that was kind of an answer to those naysayers who thought he was finished."

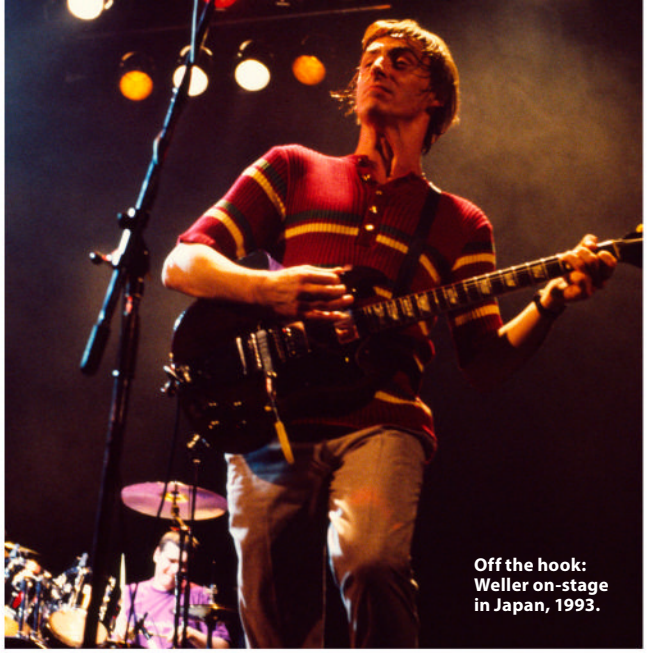
"It was me just taking the piss, really," Weller says now. "Because I was written off, especially from the late-Style Council onwards. And on that first album, there were some shocking reviews. Y'know, saying, 'He's over… he's finished.' I was like, 'Really? We'll fucking see about that.' That always puts the fight in me, which is a good thing."

One other standout track was raw and personal in a different way. All The Pictures On The Wall vividly depicted the ennui and sadness of a romantic breakup. "I was not happy in my marriage [to singer and Style Council member Dee C. Lee], and I felt it was breaking down," says Weller. "I thought we'd lost whatever it was."

However, thinks Weller, he may not have been aware of the song's full implications. "'Cos I remember playing it to Dee, on the guitar. Just saying, Oh, I've got this new tune. And she was really sad. On reflection, I suppose it is personal because our marriage broke down a couple of years after that. Some of these things become more apparent with time."

Lullaby-like album closer Moon On Your Pyjamas was mean-

Lawrence Watson, Camera Press/Ed Sirrs, Getty/Kevin Cummins



Off the hook: Weller on-stage in Japan, 1993.

while a song of fatherly devotion written for the couple's then five-year-old son, Natt. "I was away on Natty's fifth birthday," Weller recalls. "I was on tour in America somewhere and I was really gutted, and I remember writing that song for him. But I've never asked him what he thought about it. Not for years anyway."

Taken altogether, these very adult themes only served to enhance the appeal of *Wild Wood* for Weller's returning, and expanding, fan base. Many of those who had followed the singer through The Jam and The Style Council were now likely going through similar experiences or challenges. Upon its release, the album went straight into the UK chart at Number 2.

"I think there's a lot of themes on there that probably people did connect with," he says, "'cos we were all in the same boat really. We were doing this parenting and couples thing and just trying to make it up as we go along, as you do.

"One couple said to me, 'Oh, you helped us get our love life back together. We listened to that album, and we reconnected.' I thought, Ah, good. Quite a lot of information, but good."

AS AN ADDENDUM TO *WILD WOOD*, WELLER AND the band returned to The Manor in January '94 to record a standalone single: the beautiful, aching Hung Up. A Number 11 hit in April, it was his biggest solo single up to that point and immediately tacked onto the track list for the album's repressings.

"I think it was me realising you've just got to drop some of your hang-ups and move on from them," Weller says of the song. Capturing the dreamy-headed mood of the times, the success of Hung Up was aided by its striking video featuring the ensemble – now joined by Weller's soon-to-be trusty sidekick, Ocean Colour Scene guitarist Steve Cradock – looking '66 Beatles cool while performing on the lawn at The Manor.

"We were all on E's, man," Weller says, laughing. "It was in them days. Fucking E's and whizz. Not Whitey, but me and Cradock definitely."

Another new high was reached in June '94, when Weller and the group appeared on the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury, powerfully upstaging headliner Elvis Costello. "We smashed it," he grins. "He came into the dressing room and said, 'Don't give us too much of a hard time tonight, will you?' And we were like, 'Nah… don't worry about that.' But we won that day, definitely.

"A mate of ours, he'd just come up on his acid, and we started playing Wild Wood. He said he could see these beams of sun behind the stage, like God's fingers (*laughs*). It was fucking mega."

Three decades on, Weller recognises *Wild Wood* was a transformational record for him. "It restored a bit of faith in what I could do really, as a writer," he concludes. "But it's funny, when everyone just seems to connect with something… You can't plan it. You don't even know why it's happened. It's just happening."

Tom Doyle

1994

"We Were Ready To Take Over"

Transcending the OASIS hype, *somehow*, came blazing debut album *Definitely Maybe*. Noel Gallagher, at least, had no doubts…

WE ALWAYS had unshakable self-belief in Oasis. Going into the start of 1994 we didn't have Supersonic, but everything else was already written. Everybody who heard the demos of what would become *Definitely Maybe* were freaking out, so we just wanted to seize the moment. We'd been talking the talk amongst ourselves for a couple of years and when it came down to it, we were ready. Every minute I spent awake, I just knew it was going to happen.

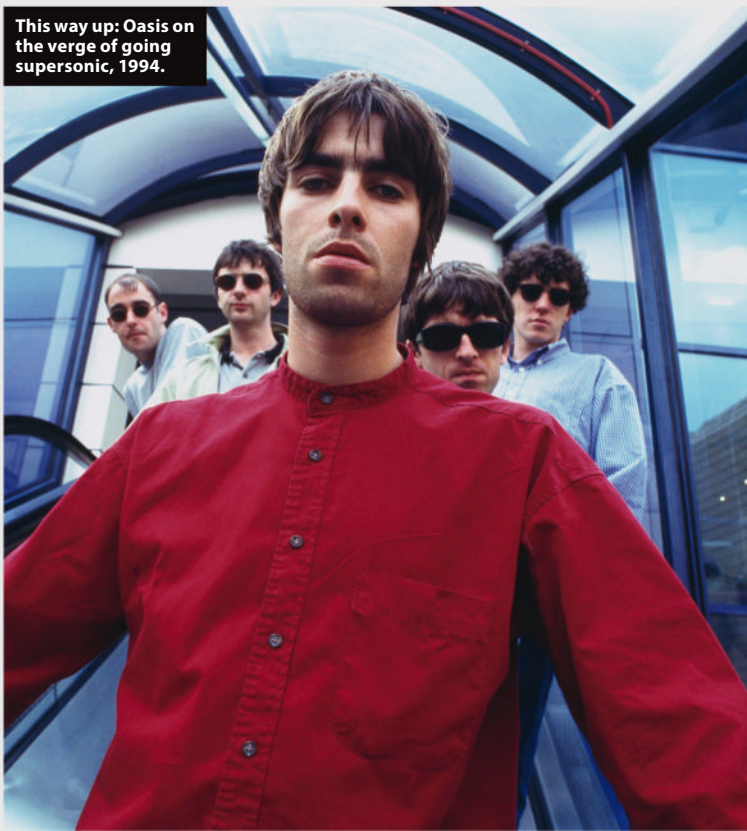
Back then, I'd hear Blur or Pulp or Suede on the radio and think, Fuck these idiots. But looking back at it now, it was an amazing time for indie music, or whatever you want to call it. But we were ready to take over. We were ready to wipe everybody out. I thought Blur, Pulp, The Stone Roses, The La's, whoever, they were great people and they had one or two great tunes, but we had 12. However loud they were, we were louder. However fast they were, we were faster. However good they were, we would trump it. They were all great bands, but we were better. It was as simple as that.

"I'd hear Blur or Pulp or Suede on the radio and think, Fuck these idiots."

Highlights for me was the night I wrote Supersonic, recorded it and mixed it in one night, and when we played Glastonbury. We went on between Echobelly and some other shit indie band and just rattled through *Definitely Maybe*. It was the biggest crowd we'd ever played to and that afternoon we got the chart position for [second single] Shakermaker. It was at Number 11 and it was at that point everyone just strapped themselves in. It was like being in a rocket ship that was taking off.

Definitely Maybe was the last great punk album in many respects. Oasis were a punk band with Beatles melodies. We had no effects, barely any equipment, just loads of attitude, 12 cans of Red Stripe and ambition. If you listen to that and *Never Mind The Bollocks…*, they're quite similar. That album was about the angst of being a teenager in 1977. Fast forward to 1994 and *Definitely Maybe* is about the glory of being a teenager. It's being down the park with a ghetto blaster distilled. It's no coincidence that it's lasted this long. Maybe there have been technically better or bigger records since, but that album is the real fucking deal. There's no bullshit on it. It's an honest snapshot of working-class lads trying to make it.

As told to Chris Catchpole



This way up: Oasis on the verge of going supersonic, 1994.

1995

"It Was Beatles Now"

How *Anthology*'s multi-media, breadth-and-depth reboot set a trend in catalogue mining and breathed new life into THE BEATLES, and MOJO.

IT'S FEBRUARY, 1994, AND PAUL MCCARTNEY, George Harrison and Ringo Starr have reunited to create new music for an ambitious new Beatles project. "But as the thought of the three of us actually sitting down in a studio started to get nearer and nearer, I got cold feet," McCartney told your writer the following year. "I thought, Does the world need a three-quarter Beatle record?"

The Beatle ever foremost in getting Beatles records *done*, had a brainwave.

"What if *John* was on, the three of us *and* John, like a real new record?" he recalled. "I talked to Yoko and she said that she had these three tracks, including Free As A Bird.

"I played them to the other guys, warning Ringo to have his hanky ready," he continued. "The lyrics in the middle weren't finished, which was even more exciting 'cos then that was really like working on a record with John – we all chipped in a bit."

I asked McCartney how the 'Threetles' set a style for the track and he said, "The style was set by John," ie. by the demo itself. "We didn't go for Beatles circa 1967. It was Beatles *now*."

Wherever you rank it among the Fabs' 45s, Free As A Bird, released in December 1995, was an extraordi-

"Britpop changed the complexion; all those bands would name The Beatles as a major influence."

Free again: Ringo Starr, Paul McCartney and George Harrison, AKA the incredible returning Beatles, 1995.

nary feat, contemporising a band defunct for over two and a half decades. Repudiated by punk, The Beatles had not felt very *now* for many years. Yet their influence was part of the DNA of the musicians who'd grown up with them, not just The Jam, Squeeze and Elvis Costello but XTC, Siouxsie And The Banshees, then Prince, The Bangles, Tears For Fears and Crowded House. And after years of avoidance, two of the surviving three Beatles began basking in their own rear-view glow, Harrison with his 1987 hit When We Was Fab and McCartney, triumphantly back on the road in 1989-90 after nearly a decade, peppering his sets with Beatle classics.

What had been bubbling under was now surfacing, as young British bands began coming out loud and proud as Beatles fans. Crucial, too, was the December 1994 publication of Ian MacDonald's book Revolution In The Head. Analysing, evaluating and contextualising every official recording, this game-changer became an instant Beatles bible – debated, disputed, but always respected.

EMI/Parlophone were keeping tabs on this upswing in Beatlemania. The company's regular market research into the appeal of their top line and catalogue artists showed that in the '80s The Beatles "were definitely in a bit of a lull," reveals a senior executive of the time. "Britpop changed the complexion; all those bands would name The Beatles as a major influence, and that moved the dial massively to create an environment where *Anthology* would do very, very well."

JUST HOW WELL COULD BE GAUGED THE YEAR before, 1994, when the *Live At The BBC* double CD was released to more than five million certified sales, energising the hitherto dormant Apple as the massive *Anthology* project got underway, driven by The Beatles' former roadie and trusted fixer, the late Neil Aspinall.

Anthology's time had come, but it couldn't have happened any sooner.

"When [Allen] Klein and the lawyers got in, it got very fraught," Paul McCartney told MOJO. "And then, 20 years of sorting it out. Only then did we feel free to do what was going to be called The Long And Winding Road, which ended up being the *Anthology*."

Beginning as an idea for a feature-length documentary based on footage Aspinall had stashed since the group's demise, augmented by a series of interviews with the surviving band members filmed from 1992 onwards, *Anthology* expanded into a TV documentary series – to be screened on ITV in the UK and ABC in the States in late '95 – and an even more jam-packed eight-volume VHS/LaserDisc set. Just as bumper were *Anthology*'s three chronological double-CD deep dives into the archive of Beatles outtakes and other unreleased recordings, including Free As A Bird and another Ono-supplied demo, Real Love, fleshed out by the three survivors into a single.

The project unveiled revelation upon revelation, and not just for the fans. "It was a bit shocking to see my personality so clearly portrayed," McCartney admitted in reference to a take of Besame Mucho on *Anthology 1*. "I was even cornier than I thought."

When *Anthology* was announced, global anticipation ran sky-high and, with the staff all fans, MOJO went all-in: an entire issue bar news and reviews devoted to the band; not just one cover but a choice of three, colour-coded white (a 1965 photo), red (a 1967 photo) and blue (1968), announcing, 'They're back!' No need for the band's name. McCartney stepped up to talk at length, and we found rare and unpublished photographs and interviews including Lennon with Barry Miles in 1969, their voices on cassette transcribed in the MOJO office hushing the usual hubbub.

The issue (MOJO 24 1, 2, or 3, depending on cover) was a colossal hit. And as The Beatles have followed *Anthology* with revisions, remasters and remixes, MOJO has been there every step of the way.

Mat Snow

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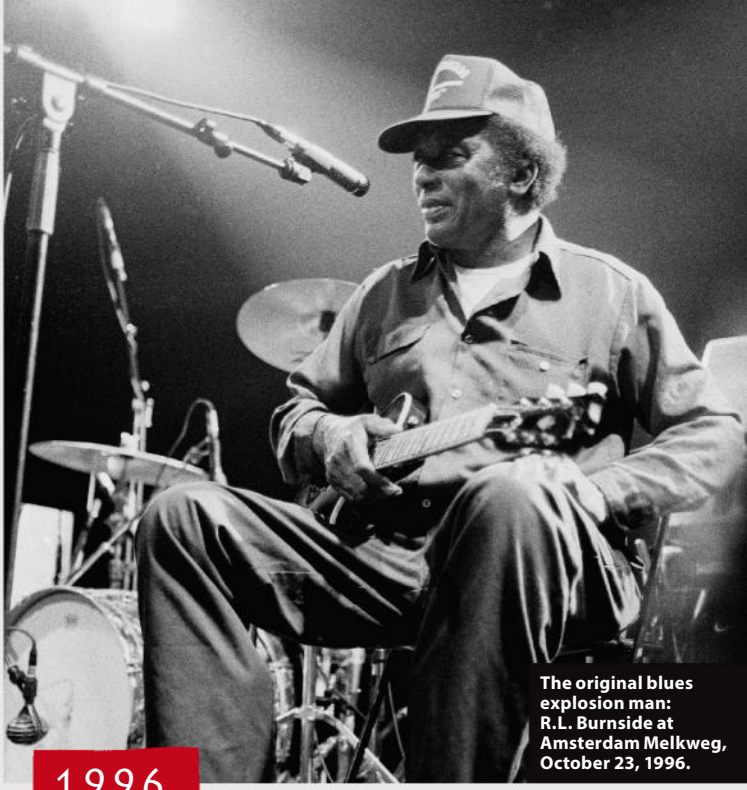


The original blues explosion man: R.L. Burnside at Amsterdam Melkweg, October 23, 1996.

1996

Boogie Bonanza

With the help of Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, R.L. BURNSIDE's *A Ass Pocket Of Whiskey* took his music to the world. His bluesman grandson Cedric was there.

JON SPENCER first got in touch with Big Daddy [AKA R.L.] in 1993. He was a huge fan of Big Daddy and hill country blues, and he said how he wanted to make a record with him. At this time, Big Daddy's band was me and Kenny Brown, and Jon invited us to open for the Blues Explosion at the Milky Way in New York. They were just about to soundcheck and Jon's manager gave us ear plugs, and sure 'nuff when they started playing we had to put the ear plugs in. Big Daddy was, "Oh no, no, no, man, it's too loud. The people aren't going to buy it, it's not going to sell."

But Jon kept asking him and we played some more dates opening for him and they hit it off as people, they really connected because Jon loved the music so much and in the end Big Daddy agreed to do the album.

So we had a day off from touring and Big Daddy said, "Let's do this then," and he, Kenny Brown and Jon, Russell [Simins, drummer] and Judah [Bauer, guitar] went to Lunati Farms, which was this little cabin, and in four hours they recorded *A Ass Pocket Of Whiskey* and I got to watch them put it together.

"Big Daddy was, 'Oh no, man, it's too loud. It's not going to sell.'"

Lunati Farms was up in the hills and deep in the woods of north Mississippi, close to Chewalla Lake, and as we were driving there, we were thinking, Where are we going? It was getting dark and when we got there, it was like a setting for a horror movie. It was obvious it was a hunting lodge, there were stuffed animals and deer heads on the walls. Matthew Johnson was already there, he was the producer and he brought along the studio equipment from Fat Possum and set it up. Big Daddy always recorded quick and live, and we all drank a little moonshine and ate a little food and then Big Daddy went for it, and watching them play Boogie Chillen and Shake 'Em On Down and Walkin' Blues, they were having a bunch of fun.

Jon knew that Big Daddy wasn't going to change for anybody and Jon had to fit in with that. He and [Burnside's fellow hill country bluesman] Junior Kimbrough called it 'feel music', you just get up there and do your thing, just feel it. You don't know when you're going to change. You might stay on one chord for a whole song. And Big Daddy got his own rhythm, he was inside it and there was this energy and feeling in the room. They created something so special that night.

He still didn't think it would sell but it became one of his biggest albums, and suddenly Big Daddy had this whole new audience of younger fans and that album acted as a gateway into the blues for them. Whenever I am on-stage and playing I remember that energy they created in that studio that night.

As told to Lois Wilson

1997

"We Found Our Own Heavy Psychedelia"

BLUR killed Britpop, and were themselves reborn, on *Blur*. Graham Coxon tells us how, and why they started "scaring people again."

THE *BLUR* ALBUM was a bit like us walking up a road and seeing what's up ahead and wanting to try another route before we'd gone too far, a route that was more difficult and challenging, a more worthwhile route for us as musicians.

After *The Great Escape* [1995] I decided to write a letter to Damon [Albarn] because I wasn't confident enough to broach conversations about my needs. It was something like: "I'd like to start scaring people again, because at the start, we were into unease, songs like Oily Water and Resigned. Let's make a bloody row, and have fun." I didn't get much of a reaction but Damon did give me the steering wheel a little more. I think he was sympathetic, and keen, for everyone to express themselves, and for me to have moments to mess around with noise. I wanted to see what the guitar could do without much intervention from me. But Damon knows that when it comes to enveloping his voice in something beautiful, I can do that too. But *Blur* does get called a 'Graham album' a lot, because of things like Essex Dogs.

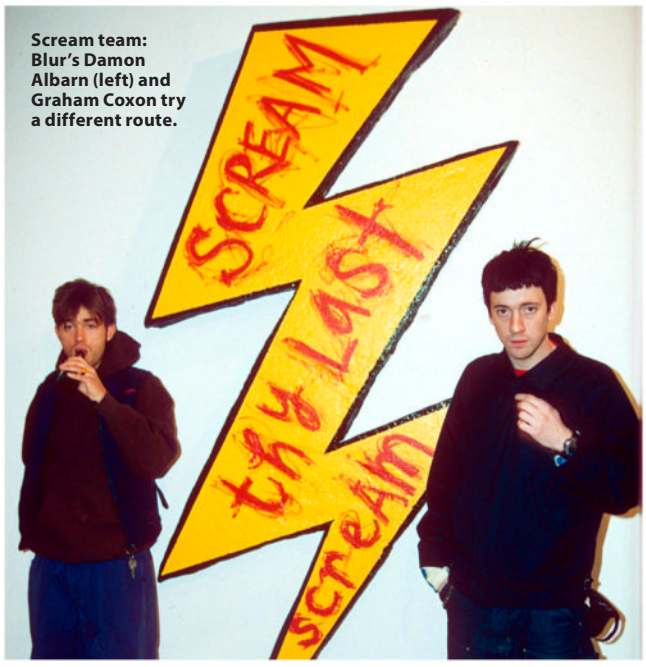
"It came from an authentic place. Authenticity is an amazing force field!"

We felt forced into this strange Britpop thing, which we had nothing to do with, but I suppose we tried to kill any stink of Britpop from our clothes and move away from our beloved Kinks – though there was still Bowie, because of Damon [Albarn] and [producer] Stephen Street. I think we found our own heavy psychedelia, rather than staying with Toad-of-Toad-Hall psychedelia. But we also had a digital recording set-up that we could finally trust, making loops and stuff: hence Essex Dogs.

I don't know what concerns EMI had, because they loved Song 2, which we had played them for a laugh. We had Beetlebum too. We did Strange News From Another Star for a lark, and maybe a B-side, but [Food label boss] Andy Ross wanted it on the album. It's an unfocused album but each song has its own personality, which can be tricky to achieve.

If anyone was going to have a go at a Blur album, it would have been this one, because of its self-indulgent moments. I can't recall how it was reviewed, or particularly liked, but it came from an authentic place, and then it's hard to rip it to shreds. Authenticity is an amazing force field!

As told to Martin Aston



Scream team: Blur's Damon Albarn (left) and Graham Coxon try a different route.

Shutterstock, Getty

Altered state: Beck – "colliding the past with a modern sensibility."

1998

The Changeling

How BECK defied '90s conventions on *Mutations* – MOJO's Album Of 1998 – and altered music's course. By Beck.

WHEN I THINK OF *Mutations*, I think of creative catharsis, energy, joy and fun. It was a time of possibilities. It was the beginning of different elements in my music, my first time in a proper studio, the first time with [producer] Nigel Godrich, the first time recording with my touring band. After *Odelay* [1996], we'd toured relentlessly for two and a half years, which felt like an eternity, but I finally had a few months off, and we were incredibly hungry to create something new. We felt like kids given the car keys for the first time, and we could drive anywhere we wanted.

I'd wanted to make an acoustic album for years. I had a bunch of singer-songwriter songs that I'd kept to myself, because the climate was so dismissive at the time. The odd quieter record like Elliott Smith aside, music was more aggressive and confrontational, still with that indie rock punk ethos, and anything folkie felt hippy. Anyone who worked with samplers and cut up different genres wasn't considered a real songwriter. OK, we'll record onto tape, with live musicians, like it's 1972. I didn't like the idea of being defined by what I was doing with technology.

"I think that *Mutations* is what indie music became over the next 20 years. Everything's blurred nowadays."

I wanted Nigel because of the sound he got on [Radiohead's] *OK Computer*, a sound I'd heard only in my head for years, which I loved on records from Joni Mitchell to Serge Gainsbourg. But Nigel only had 14 days before starting [Radiohead's] *Kid A*, so we had to record and mix a song a day, with no time to obsess over detail. There's something punk about making a record that way. We intended to make a quieter, folky record but it's a lot more than that; I think it's playful too, and sometimes tongue-in-cheek, lyrics like, "And I get caught up in the moonlight/Reaching out for a rotten egg" [from Canceled Check]. I was nervous about the unapologetically heartfelt ballads like Nobody's Fault But My Own, but I was pleasantly surprised to find they were embraced, which gave me the confidence to make *Sea Change* later.

It was a letdown for anyone who wanted another *Odelay*, but I think it's great. I also think that *Mutations* is what indie music became over the next 20 years. We hadn't entertained the possibility of where things could go in terms of songwriting and genre-bending, colliding the past with a modern sensibility. Everything's blurred nowadays.

As told to Martin Aston

1999

A Scientific Revolution

Phys, chem, psych, bereavement and catharsis combined on THE FLAMING LIPS' *The Soft Bulletin*. Singer Wayne Coyne takes us back.

STEVEN [DROZD, multi-instrumentalist] and I were just kind of longing to make more personal, emotional music. We felt like we needed to make a leap into another version of ourselves.

We knew we were going to call it *The Soft Bulletin*, because it was the title of a cassette tape compilation I'd made that we'd play in the van as we drove around. It would have been things that hinted at symphonic, emotional music. Roberta Flack, Ennio Morricone, [Gerry & The Pacemakers'] Ferry Cross The Mersey… y'know, the way George Martin arranged the strings on that almost sounds Middle Eastern. Steven and I would be like, "Fuck, I don't know how they're doing that. But if we get up to Tarbox Road [studio in Cassadaga, New York] with [co-producer] Dave Fridmann, we can figure it out."

The very first song that we came up with was Race For The Prize. I mean, those drums… that very beginning where Steven counts in, "One two one…" *crack*. It just had such an amazing sound, and that fanfare, those high strings and all that. Y'know, it felt like, Here's the opening sequence of this epic new adventure… There's that dopamine release of going into new territory. I think all through *The Soft Bulletin*, that's happening.

When we were making it, my father had just died, and Dave Fridmann's sister had gotten killed. And I guess in a way these things just change you. Steven is virtually an orphan. Everybody in his family has died of, y'know, car accidents, old age, drugs, and all manner of sad, bad things. He'd been through so much. Now, these are all unspoken things. This wouldn't have been something that Steven or I or Dave would have been talking about. But with *The Soft Bulletin*, we were reaching for this other dimension of, "How do you put yourself into your songs, yet still be doing songs that are entertaining and powerful?"

We felt [for the live shows], There are no rules any more. We didn't have any desire to even resemble our former selves. Part of us thought, Why don't we just do whatever the fuck we want? I'm wearing that yellow raincoat and I'm putting blood on my head and I'm beating the gong. Steven is sitting there playing piano, or he's playing guitar. We don't even have drums on-stage. We're using the projectors and the tracks for all that.

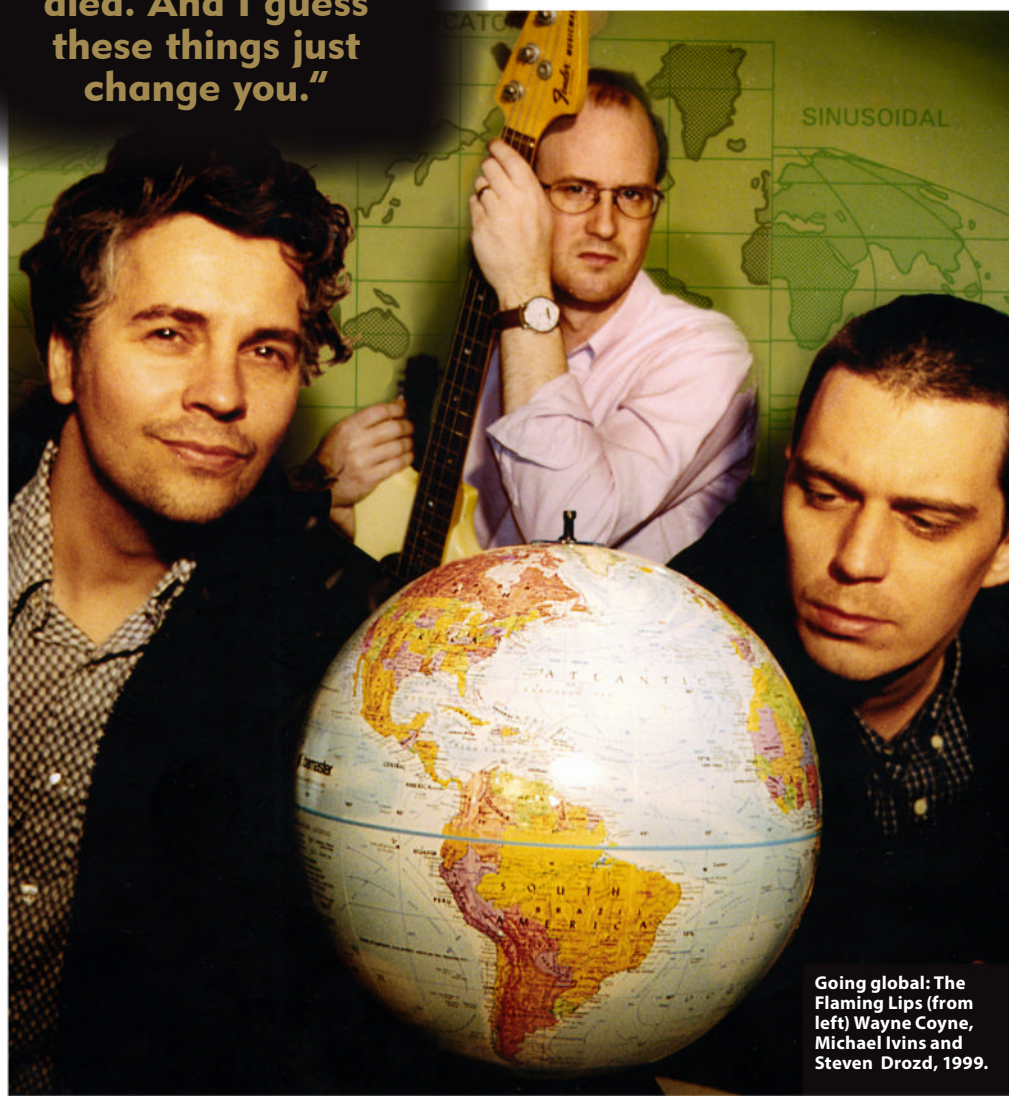
One of the very first *Soft Bulletin* shows that we played was in Dallas, Texas. The kids that would come to see us in Dallas notoriously would take lots of acid and we didn't want these kids to be pummelled with this heavy emotional stuff. We're playing Suddenly Everything Has Changed or Feeling Yourself Disintegrate, but we still wanted it to be some version of a party. So I've got hand puppets, and we've got flowers on the screen.

When we play these songs now, I think our audience wants this emotional thing to happen. And that's the greatest, greatest reward I think any performer can get. Y'know, it's like that line in A Spoonful Weighs A Ton: "And though they were sad, they rescued everyone." It's the people that are feeling this emotion that really relieve all of us. Somehow by confronting the emotion, and by just being able to relive the sadness, or whatever it is, they give power to all of us. That's what *The Soft Bulletin* is kind of saying.

That doesn't mean that while we were making it, it was grey every day. We weren't sad. I mean, we had the best times ever. We were always laughing. Everything's always optimistic in the end. The further we get away from it, it's like, It's something that we allowed to happen, and we didn't fuck it up (*laughs*). That's a magical moment that I don't think any of us could ever recreate again. And knowing that we created *The Soft Bulletin*, we wouldn't feel like we'd need to. It's there… it will always be there.

As told to Tom Doyle

"When we were making it, my father had just died. And I guess these things just change you."



Going global: The Flaming Lips (from left) Wayne Coyne, Michael Ivins and Steven Drozd, 1999.

Jay Blakesberg/Warner Music Group

"I Wanted To Write A Song The Way Michael Jackson Did"

With *De Stijl*, THE WHITE STRIPES recreated rock from its base elements. "I loved that it was our own little world," says Jack White.

THE STUDIO WHERE WE'D RECORDED the first White Stripes LP [*s/t*, 1999] wasn't that great. Most of the gear was broken. But we'd gotten hold of a nice half-inch 8-track through my brother for a few hundred bucks so we just fell into the notion that we'd make *De Stijl* in my living room. That was probably a bad idea because what happens when you try to do it in your free time is that days turn into months. That was my first lesson. You need to go somewhere *else* just because of the confinement and the constraints you set yourself. But the naivety of who Meg and I were at that time is very sweet looking back, because it was total freedom. There was no responsibility, nobody had heard of us, no-one was telling us what to do, no-one was trying to sign us. We were still in Detroit, just me and Meg in that safe world.

It was when we were recording this LP that I had this sort of epiphany. I'd found a book on [the Dutch abstract art movement] De Stijl in a junk store and got obsessed with it. They were trying to break elements of design and art down to the simplest forms of squares and lines and primary colours and I thought, Well, this ties everything together. That's directly comparable to the breaking down of music to just the blues and guitar, drums and vocals. So we called the record *De Stijl*, which made some people think we were a fake band of first-year art students. At that time garage rock was so much about authenticity: anti-fake, anti-digital, anti-pop and we were completely constructed. Our red, white and black stage image did not follow any hipster rules. It was about grabbing hold of something and creating your own little world in a sea of people just wearing jeans and T-shirts.

I loved that it was our own little world we were creating back then and refining and taking it to the next level: "Oh, that wasn't for the photoshoot, they dress like that every day." That changed when we met the mainstream. Meg's drumming had come out of The Velvet Underground's Moe Tucker, of Detroit bands like The Gories where their drummer, Peg, didn't even have a skin on her bass drum. Nobody in the Detroit scene had a problem with Meg's drumming. But when we started to get more press I remember Meg saying to me, "Jack, these guys are not gonna understand. They're just gonna think I'm terrible compared to [Rush drummer] Neil Peart." I said, "I'm here with you through all of that. They're also gonna make fun of me. There's nothing we can do." We were just like, Hey, people are gonna witness our world. We'll put on a show.

Ewolf

"It was total freedom. Nobody had heard of us, no-one was trying to sign us."

THE *DE STIJL* SONG THAT STILL STANDS OUT FOR ME is You're Pretty Good Looking (For A Girl). I wanted to write a song the way Michael Jackson did. He would just hum the music to himself and write the song around that. I made up that song while I was driving in the van, vocal melody and lyrics, then came home and put guitar chords and drum beat underneath it. It was melodic bubblegum pop and I remember people hearing that track and saying, "Wow, that band got bad really fast." I wanted to show people, even if we only make a couple of records we're not just a one-trick-pony garage rock band. We would be multi-directional.

That album could have just been all slide-guitar songs, though. I was so obsessed with it. That's what's happening with the songs Death Letter and Little Bird and Sister, Do You Know My Name?. Maybe I took it too far with A Boy's Best Friend. That one is almost too sad, too quiet, too slow. That was more emotional in ways that I couldn't really figure out before. With our first album I'd have been too awkward to put in any emotional music but when we were at home recording ourselves I could do it for the first time.

I still think the *De Stijl* album is one of the most important things I've ever done. We could have easily just remade the first White Stripes record but we were in our small garage rock community, we didn't have anything to prove to anybody else so it became more about proving to myself that I could do all these things and not just be this one-chord wonder. If the band had broken up after the first album I'd have gone back to work, maybe formed a different band and never climbed past that stage of songwriting and artistry. *De Stijl* proved I could take this to other places. But it's unbelievable that Meg came with me. People need to realise how shy Meg is. For her to sit down behind the drum kit is insane. But then to get on-stage and sing into a microphone? Are you kidding me? It was unbelievable, a miracle, a blessing from above, just a beautiful, beautiful thing. People should write books about Meg White. To me she's like Hank Williams or Jimi Hendrix. They are one in a billion. One in a billion.

I remember how much MOJO meant to me and Meg back then. They were little Bibles. We never gave a shit about being on the cover of anything but I remember saying to Meg, "Wouldn't it be amazing if we could get on the cover of MOJO one day?", and we both agreed. We both agreed that's never going to happen.

As told to Andrew Male

The kids are all white: Meg and Jack get conceptual in 2000.

Future facing: Bob Dylan, in 2001; (below) chilling with Ryan Adams (left) and Elton John.

"Bob Was A Sponge – Always Growing"

"*Love And Theft*" – the best album in quote marks since "*Heroes*" – opened BOB DYLAN's insanely fertile 21st century. "That gig *never* got boring," says key bandmate Larry Campbell.

ON JUNE 22, 1999, BOB DYLAN AND Paul Simon played the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. Touring together, they alternated slots and that night was Simon's turn to open. His craft was flawless, yet the night's closing set was of a different order.

Backed by multi-instrumentalist Larry Campbell, guitarist Charlie Sexton, bassist Tony Garnier and drummer David Kemper, Dylan cranked the volume and speed on classics including Mr Tambourine Man and All Along The Watchtower. The audience leaped from their seats and began dancing. Bob and his roadhouse rockers ended with an encore of Buddy Holly's Not Fade Away: a howling declaration of a suitor determined to not go gently into that good night. The Hollywood Bowl crowd roared along with Dylan: "You know my love will not fade away!"

Two years earlier, 1997's *Time Out Of Mind* had collected the strongest batch of Dylan originals since 1989's *Oh Mercy*, both produced by Daniel Lanois. Despite the first-rate session players – some hired by Dylan, others by Lanois – the two didn't always agree on who should play what or how it should sound. Although a commercial hit and widely considered an artistic renewal, winning three Grammy Awards, by sessions' end the artist and producer only communicated through the engineer.

Larry Campbell can master any stringed instrument and had played with proto-Americana champs Kinky Friedman and Doug Sahm, among others. He joined Dylan's touring band in March 1997 and missed the *TOOM* drama, but he has a hunch what the problem was. "It was the same thing with Mark Knopfler who was *my hero*, but when he produced *Infidels*, it sounded like a Knopfler record."

"Bob seemed confident and eager to explore a lot of new stuff."

Commissioned to write a song for the film The Wonder Boys, Dylan produced it himself with that same road band and young engineer Chris Shaw

Getty (2), Sam Jones

at the board. Afterwards, Dylan was overheard saying to the band, "I don't need a producer. I think I can produce the next record." The powerful Things Have Changed won a 2001 Academy Award for Best Original Song.

THE BAND WERE ALREADY ENROLLED IN A CRASH course on Dylan's version of American musical history, and soundchecks at gigs became opportunities for Professor Zimmerman to school them in the template he wanted for specific songs. He'd play vintage pieces on piano and guitar, or tapes by artists such as jump blues singer Big Joe Turner with boogie-woogie pianist Pete Johnson, country duo Johnnie And Jack, and Delta bluesman Son House. He was also immersed in crooners Bing Crosby and Dean Martin.

Campbell: "We'd run through those songs at soundcheck and he'd be working on his own lyrics over those songs. Then the chords would change, the feel would change, and all of a sudden you got a Bob Dylan song. It was a really interesting way to work, to watch these things develop. We'd throw our personalities in too and Bob would make further adjustments to the chord progressions or musical hooks. By the time we got in the studio, we all had a really good feel for how these songs would go. And then he brought in [Sir Douglas Quintet/*TOOM* organist] Augie Meyers which helped them take on their final personality."

The songs on *"Love And Theft"* also featured more sophisticated chords than Dylan generally used.

Campbell: "He'd play some old tune and he'd ask me, 'What is that chord there?' and I'd show him. In fact I gave him a book of jazz chord voicings for guitar. He was really receptive – a sponge – always growing."

They recorded 12 songs in 12 days in spring 2001, in rarely more than a handful of takes. That band's line-up is often considered Bob's finest during the so-called Never Ending Tour period. Kemper offered propulsive snap, Garnier a rock-solid bottom, while Campbell and Sexton were a virtuosic and complementary two-guitar team. *"Love And Theft"* may be the only popular music album that successfully alternates country blues and 1930s swing with hard rock textures, presenting an overview of a century of American music as filtered through Dylan's original compositions and production under his alias of Jack Frost.

Released on September 11, 2001, *"Love And Theft"*'s upbeat ambience provided a respite from that period's horrors. It went gold in both the UK and US, won the Grammy for Best Contemporary Folk Album and usually makes Dylan Top 10 Albums lists. And *Time Out Of Mind* and *"Love and Theft"* were no flukes: the ongoing run has included books, films, a radio show, a Nobel Prize and more albums, up to 2020's *Rough And Rowdy Ways*.

"Bob seemed confident and eager to explore a lot of new stuff," says Campbell of his almost seven years in the band. "There was a lot of forward motion. That gig *never* got boring!"

Michael Simmons

Do the hotel foxtrot: Wilco (Jeff Tweedy far right) felt victorious in 2002.

2002

Bravo, Victor

Yankee Hotel Foxtrot became a defining triumph for Wilco, but not before courting disaster, recalls mainman JEFF TWEEDY.

IN GENERAL, I don't have a good biographical memory about things, especially pre-drug treatment. But we were on tour, I think in Providence, Rhode Island, when *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* finally came out [after an arduous recording odyssey involving splits with bandmate Jay Bennett and Wilco's original label, Reprise]. And I did cry. I remember seeing it in a record store and being surprisingly overwhelmed – that it was actually real. I mean, people were already listening to it, it was on the internet. But as a kid who grew up with records – I just love, love, love records – it was amazing to see it in person. We felt victorious in a lot of ways, not over the record company or the music business or anything like that, but just victorious over adversity. It wasn't easy, and when things aren't easy, you tend to appreciate them more.

I was a little scared we weren't going to be able to sound as good on a bigger stage, because playing songs like Radio Cure on a festival stage isn't easy to do. But we responded to it like a challenge. Eventually we figured out we needed more people, but at the time it was a four-piece band, all stepping on samples and using computers and trying to create some of the textures from *Yankee* by using technology we weren't really well versed in. It was kind of a crapshoot.

"We felt victorious in a lot of ways, just victorious over adversity."

And I loved the album. That was one of the amazing things about the whole process: people I was told to trust were telling me this record sucked. We ended up getting dropped and we had fans saying it wasn't what they wanted. And somehow, every time I listened to it, I'd just go, "They're crazy, this is a pop record. It's really good and I'm really proud of it."

I don't think it was that weird; it just might have been at a different end of the record collection from where people listening to us at the time were spending their money. People attached a certain amount of [Tweedy's previous band] Uncle Tupelo aesthetics to what we were doing without us really nourishing that. The audience really feels integrated now: we can play anything from any period in the band and there's a sort of a uniform appreciation from the audience. But 10 years ago, you could tell if the audience was primarily made up of people wanting the countryish stuff or the *Yankee* stuff. It would always feel like there were factions. I don't really get that as much any more. It's really lovely.

As told to John Mulvey

2003

Truth *And* Dare

With *Lowedges*, RICHARD HAWLEY brought a unique "old" voice to British pop. Here's how he remembers it…

MY WIFE HELEN bought me this beautiful guitar made in Slovenia in the 1930s, called a Melodija Menges, from an antique place that was jointly run by Russ Senior, who actually I replaced in Pulp, and Dave Berry, the singer who did [1964 hit single] The Crying Game. It was quiet, so I could play it late at night.

Most of the songs on *Lowedges* were written on that little guitar. I'd been in a controlled environment for so long before then, trying to have hits and be massively successful with [previous bands] Longpigs or Treebound Story. The minute I picked up the guitar to do my own stuff – I just literally threw that shit and that thinking into the fucking bin.

At the time, I thought, Rock'n'roll is not supposed to be inhabited by old gits like me – I mean, I thought I was old then at 35! I look back and think, Fucking hell, you've got a really young family and your back's against the wall. If it's going to be the last roll of the dice, why not have the good grace to tell your truth?

There's two songs on that record about death and birth. Run For Me was about my dad, where he literally took his guitar off the wall, and just said, "It's yours, son." He was a beautiful man, a brilliant guitar player, a gifted writer and he was forced, like so many other people, to abandon his dreams. It was in 2002. He got diagnosed with cancer. I'll say these things like some kind of fucking robot now, but it was fucking deep. There's a lot in the album cover too. My dad had this beautiful BSA Goldstar motorbike and he had to sell it during the steel strikes, along with his guitars, to feed us. I had this idea that I wanted to sit on that bike like I did when I was little, one last time. Wrenchy [Hawley's manager Graham Wrench] found the guy my dad had sold it to, and he lived on [Sheffield suburb] Lowedges. And then there's the instrumental track Danny, which is about my son, who was born in 2000. When he came out, and they put him in my arms, he looked like that music sounded.

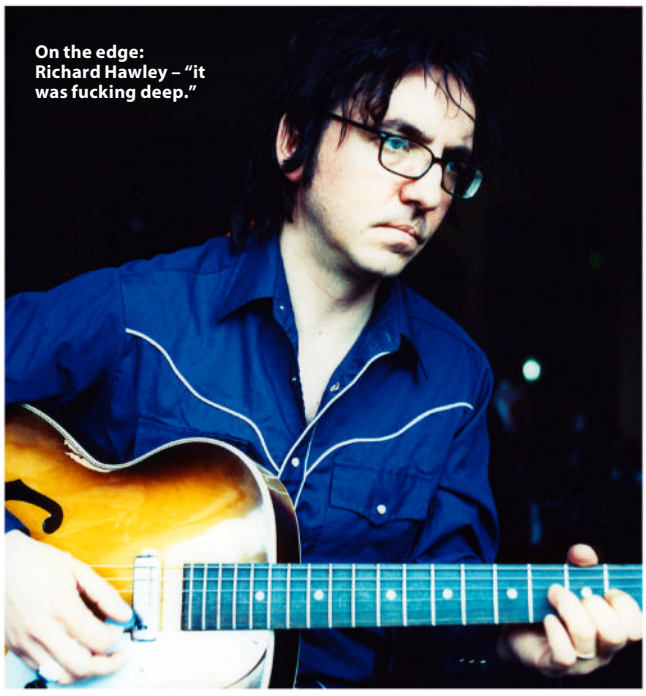
"At the time, I thought, Rock'n'roll is not supposed to be inhabited by old gits like me."

As a record, it is a moment in time. Human beings have to learn a lot of things – tenderness and empathy and stuff like that. I guess rock'n'roll is not specifically supposed to be the domain of those things, but when I wrote them… I've got little mantras to help me keep going, and one of them is, "You've got to feel what you feel, when you feel it."

I owe a great debt to a lot of people, like [Setanta records boss] Keith Cullen, Graham and my missus. They were the first to actually just go, "OK, we believe in this." It actually was a really good period of time, looking back.

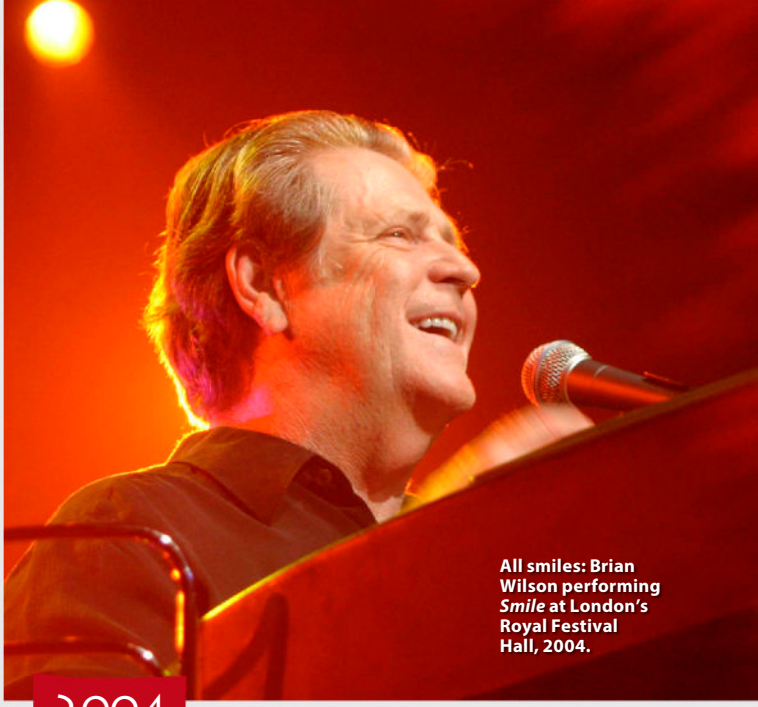
As told to Ian Harrison

Now Then: The Best Of Richard Hawley is released by BMG on October 20.



On the edge: Richard Hawley – "it was fucking deep."

Joe Dilworth/Getty, Awais Butt/LFI/Avalon



All smiles: Brian Wilson performing *Smile* at London's Royal Festival Hall, 2004.

2004

"It Changed My Life A Lot"

How reviving The Beach Boys' shelved *Smile* album brought healing to its genius creator. "I was so proud," says BRIAN WILSON.

OF ALL THE rock legends of lost songs, weekends and minds, none hold a candle to the great lost album *Smile*. Envisioned as the follow-up to The Beach Boys' 1966 masterpiece *Pet Sounds*, with music by Brian Wilson and words by Van Dyke Parks, it was gloriously, dangerously ambitious. Wilson, then 24, was at a creative peak. A year later he abandoned it and took to his bed, a mental and emotional wreck.

It was Wilson's wife Melinda's idea to revisit the *Smile* tapes gathering dust in the vaults. Wilson and his band had had great success with the Pet Sounds Tour in the '90s. The only way to follow it in the '00s, she said, was to do something spectacular like *Smile*.

Wilson's bandmate Darian Sahanaja, well versed in *Smile*'s bootleg half-life, took the job of digitising long-neglected tapes and putting bits and pieces in order. First, he talked to Brian in terms of a live show, not an album. "I took the works that sounded more complete, chose a piece, played it to him on my laptop and hoped he would take well to it. Some he would just say, 'No, turn it off.' There were others where his eyes sort of flared up – who knows what was going on in that mind of his but he was feeling something from it."

"*Smile* changed from this albatross that hung over Brian, to living, breathing music."

Slowly but surely *Smile* changed "from this albatross that hung over him, to living, breathing music. It seemed like he was putting it in a newer context. But still we had this show to perform and had no idea how people were going to react."

Smile premiered at the Royal Festival Hall in London in February 2004. It was a triumph. "I kept looking over at Brian and I saw what was almost like the weight just floating away from his body," says Sahanaja. After the show he grabs me and says, 'Darian, we *did* it!'"

Two months later, they decided to record the show in the studio. When it was done, engineer Mark Linett handed Wilson a CDR. "What's this?" Brian asked. "That's the album, that's *Smile*," Sahanaja told him. "Brian put it to his chest and said, 'I'm going to hold this close to my heart.'"

Today, looking back nearly two decades on, Brian Wilson tells MOJO, "It was very emotional. It really changed my life a lot. I had shelved the album for so many years, it was a relief to get it done and bring it to the world. I was so proud," he says. "Proud of everyone involved."

Sylvie Simmons

2005

Stratospheric!

Most had given up on there ever being another KATE BUSH album. One as great as *Aerial* was almost beyond comprehension…

A 12-YEAR GAP BETWEEN albums called for a grand gesture from Kate Bush. Having learned from what she believed were the mistakes and frustrations of 1993's *The Red Shoes* (too many tracks, recordings made on "shitty digital tape"), she resolved to create 2005's *Aerial* in the image of her favourite of her albums up to that point, 1985's *Hounds Of Love*.

Effectively, the double album *Aerial* was conceived as a longer-form, CD-era version of *Hounds…*, with its standalone songs on one disc (titled A Sea Of Honey) and its conceptual suite (A Sky Of Honey) on a second.

"I thought, Wouldn't it be nice? Double album…" Bush mused to MOJO, in her only print interview for the record, six weeks ahead of its release in November '05. "It gives people something to really get their teeth into. And also, I used to really like the double albums I bought of artists that I loved. It was somehow more of an artistic statement. I wanted it to feel like a nice object… something that had pictures and a story."

In fact, A Sea Of Honey was composed of many stories, ranging from the numbers-fetishising mathematician in the hypnotic π to the embattled Maid of Orleans appealing to God and the angels in Joanni.

Elsewhere, Bush untethered herself from rhythm and technology and returned to the piano stool, writing using what she called "an old process", while finding new forms within it. A Coral Room movingly employed a drowned world metaphor to signify the passing of time, and a milk jug, falling and smashing, standing for the death of her mother.

Far weirder was the first-person narrative of the domestic Mrs Bartolozzi, which found the titular character entranced by her washing machine in an intangibly sinister scenario. Bush grinned, clearly delighted, when revealing that she'd played someone the track and they "thought that maybe there'd been this murder going on… I thought that was great."

But the 42-minute-long A Sky Of Honey was Bush's big statement on *Aerial*: nine connected pieces following a summer afternoon through to the sunrise of the next day. Track two Prologue namechecked Ralph Vaughan Williams' The Lark Ascending and evoked the same slow-moving rustic scenery.

By the end, with the thumping title track, we'd been transported to a Balearic rave, Bush ecstatically noting "the flowers are melting" before attempting to communicate with a blackbird through the medium of laughter. "I was trying to think, What in our language is in any way comparable to bird song?" Bush explained. "The only thing that seemed to have a sort of natural connection is the way we laugh. There's something strangely connected in the shapes."

In its high concept ambition and painterly detail, *Aerial* was clearly a creative high watermark for Bush, as well as a commercial triumph (1.1 million sales worldwide). It's an album that reveals new layers with every close listen: the acid squelchy synth bass in the chorus of Joanni; the Aphex Twin-like dirt smeared over the electronic pulses at the start of King Of The Mountain.

In the latter, Bush – someone who famously never wanted to be famous – addressed the very notion of celebrity, through the concept of a somehow still-living Elvis Presley. "To be as famous as he was… how could anybody survive that and still be a human being?" she marvelled to MOJO.

But King Of The Mountain was on another level a song about how the absence of an artist inevitably attracts speculation and swirling rumours, filling the vacuum. "I just love the idea of him being alive somewhere," Bush smiled… "Away from all the people."

Meanwhile, in the absence of Kate Bush, *Aerial* has only ascended, like the lark, to new heights.

Tom Doyle

"I wanted it to feel like a nice object… something that had pictures and a story."

Trevor Leighton

Up in the air: Kate Bush wanted to "give people something they could really get their teeth into."

2006

Up From The Streets

Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not: a debut phenomenon that shocked ARCTIC MONKEYS as much as anyone, says drummer Matt Helders.

IT'S ONLY WHEN I LOOK BACK AT all the stuff around the first album now that it seems crazy. We were always on tour or recording so there wasn't time to sit around and think about what was happening. Also, I don't think people realise how many gigs we played to zero people. The first time we got played on Radio 1 we were buzzing. We listened to it in our manager's car and then went and played a gig and there were six people in the audience.

The first thing we released ourselves was Fake Tales Of San Francisco and From The Ritz To The Rubble [on May 2005 single, Five Minutes With Arctic Monkeys]. That's when I remember thinking that the lyrics had stepped up. I knew exactly what Alex [Turner] was referring to because we were all experiencing the same thing. Now it's more ambiguous, and in some ways more personal, but then he was writing for us and our friends. A song like A Certain Romance, Alex articulated it in a way that I could never have done.

"I said, If we ever get to Number 1, I'll play a gig in just my football shorts and nothing else."

Off the wall: Arctic Monkeys (from left) Matt Helders, Jamie Cook, Alex Turner and Andy Nicholson in 2006.

Much like when the internet stuff took off for us, it wasn't this master plan or a stroke of genius. Writing about what we knew seemed like the natural thing to do. We were all into American hip-hop at the time and that's what the American rappers we were listening to would do. We had other influences, like The Smiths and Elvis Costello, so fortunately we didn't go too much in that rap direction and end up being a really terrible nu-metal band.

But we had nothing to do with the whole MySpace thing. A friend of ours just ripped the MP3 and stuck the songs up on this site. We had no clue. People talked about us making it outside of the music industry, but we just thought that's how you did it. We didn't know anyone else in a band.

I didn't feel any pressure going in to record the debut album, but I don't know if, again, that's because we were in the eye of the storm. I remember we had a friend who came into the studio and he said, "I bet your first single goes Top 10." We were like, "There is no way that will happen, we're just an indie band." I said to him, "If we ever get to Number 1, I'll play a gig in just my football shorts and nothing else." It comes out and goes straight to Number 1. I did it, I kept my end of the bargain up.

We were just focused on what we were doing and had no expectations of what that album would become. It was hard to comprehend what it meant. We were all on tour and together and it felt like the whole country was buzzing about this thing. None of us expected it. We put out an EP three months later [Who The Fuck Are Arctic Monkeys?]. We'd lived with the songs on the first record for over a year and were writing new ones. We had the conversation to move straight on to the second album. Even if we never made an album that was as successful as that ever again, we needed to leave it where it was and move on.

Still, we've never *not* played I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor live and we probably will never not play it. There's 14-year-olds coming to our gigs now because their dads used to listen to that album. I didn't realise I was old enough for that to happen but apparently I am.

As told to Chris Catchpole

True grit: Robert Plant and Alison Krauss went to a new place for *Raising Sand*.

"You Can't Believe How Good I Felt"

It was a transformational year for ROBERT PLANT: "rebooted" with Alison Krauss on *Raising Sand*, and remaking history with the re-formed Led Zeppelin at The O2.

WHAT CHANCE would anybody have from my background, musically, from the whole trip of squeezing my way out of the '60s, to end up making *Raising Sand*? I could never have imagined knocking on the door there in Nashville one Sunday morning, and Alison opening the door and saying, "Tea?" And with the great shape of T Bone Burnett in the background – just a profile of this physical and creative giant.

It was a leap out of my comfort zone, and I went down there with nothing to lose. I just walked into [Nashville studio] Sound Emporium on that Monday morning, a 2-inch tape rolled over the record heads, and these guys who were so used to just getting on with it – you can hear it on countless records of American music. In my nervousness, I was very careful and sat back a lot and listened to how they worked it. Man, having had terrible dramas at times during the making of records… with *Raising Sand*, I think we said we would do three days, and in that time we got five tracks moving well.

Singing with Alison – it was not George Jones and Tammy Wynette. It was a new place for me, and I guess for Alison too. Neither of us in our normal appetite, if you like, would've ventured into those songs. Maybe Alison could've got into [Sam Phillips'] Sister Rosetta Goes Before Us, and [Tom Waits'] Trampled Rose, but I think neither of us could've imagined doing it until we were doing it.

We just grew into this thing, and you can't believe how good I felt. Alison taught me stuff that I took into the solo records I made afterwards – particularly *Lullaby…* [2014] and *Carry Fire* [2017] – and it's about restraint. You know, I look right the way back to 1981, and I was always ready to turn on the 'blue-eyed soul'-y type of thing that a lot of us singers from the '60s carried. But I knew that I could sing because there had been adventures with Zeppelin songs like The Rain Song and That's The Way, way back, where I just *sang*. And I needed to do that because I was back in a place where music lives delicately.

Did the Led Zeppelin reunion show interrupt or confuse things? No, not at all. It was nerve-wracking, because we were already missing John Bonham. The responsibility the four of us had that night, the 10th of December in London, was a responsibility to ourselves, to get it right, with enough feeling, because we hadn't visited it as a way of being for such a long, long time. It was "Goodbye Ahmet [Ertegun]" and it was, "Goodbye, everything, it's been fantastic!" So it worked, and it was good, and that was it.

Doing *Raising Sand* was definitely such a reboot for me, such a Big Bang of marvel. I made my first record in 1966, and to be honest I don't think I can hack *not* doing it. Now I understand why… I met Dylan at Roskilde, after his show a couple of years ago. It was raining, and there were three buses parked in the dark. We greeted each other and had a slight embrace, and there was a look in his eye that was exactly the same as the one I've got. And that is – it's motion. It's like, do you want to go home and read about it? Do you want to go home and speculate on whether it was wrong not to do this or that? No, you just do it. The communion, for me, is the game.

As told to Andrew Perry

"It was a leap out of my comfort zone. I went down to Nashville with nothing to lose."

David McClister

2008

"It Was A Lot For Me To Process"

FLEET FOXES' luminous debut album signalled peak neo-folk rock. Mainman Robin Pecknold is still measuring its reverberations.

ONE THING I really appreciated about growing up in Seattle was that, musically speaking, it was a small, closed and clear ecosystem. Creative and important nationally, but also intimate. In 2007 we were doing a ton of recording, but not many shows. Phil Ek [record producer, Built To Spill; Mudhoney] was a local hero, so it was great to have his early involvement and his connections at Sub Pop. It was Phil who told us we should be doing 20 vocal takes instead of three, and having him mix *Fleet Foxes* was huge, because it was mostly self-recorded at home and sounded terrible.

My childhood friendship with Skyler [Skjelset, lead guitar; mandolin] was also important in terms of Fleet Foxes' development. We lived close by and I'd be at his house for days at a time. My parents were cool, but Skyler's mom Peggy was and is a very special person. She was into stuff like The Cure, Belle & Sebastian and Tim Burton movies. We'd hang out there with her and write songs and hatch plans. I was also using Napster and Limewire to find inspirational '60s and '70s stuff that wasn't easily available elsewhere. I remember being active on Beach Boys file-sharing sites sharing different versions of *Smile*, and as a music fan and aspiring songwriter, that was a huge resource. That was also how I got my Maddy Prior and Fairport Convention stuff.

We'd finished the album by fall 2007 and knew what functions the different tracks would serve. Ragged Wood and Your Protector were singles and Blue Ridge Mountains was the ballad. That took the pressure off, and then White Winter Hymnal came along, this beautiful curveball. I remember sending out my demo of that song and getting back a lot of all-caps replies that were like "YES!" or "WOW!" (*laughs*). It came from a freer, more relaxed place and had this different, really fun arrangement.

I think playing the SXSW festival [in Austin, Texas] in May 2008 was important for our visibility. We'd signed to Sub Pop in the US and Bella Union in the UK and put out the Sun Giant EP that April, but they wanted to wait until June 2008 to put the LP out, even though it had been recorded before the EP. At SXSW, we played five shows a day for three days,

"Whenever I got my allowance I would buy MOJO. So to actually be on the cover was unbelievable."

Fantastic Mr Foxes: (from left) Josh Tillman, AKA Father John Misty, Robin Pecknold, Christian Wargo, Casey Wescott and Skyler Skjelset.

and were lucky enough to get in front of the right people. [Then MOJO Editor Phil Alexander was among those in attendance, and declared Fleet Foxes "America's next great band."]

WHEN WE FIRST PLAYED IN THE UK [AT THE Hoxton Bar & Grill in London, May 29], I was astounded that people knew the words to Oliver James. I look back and think, Did that actually fucking happen? I was only 22, and my brain wasn't even fully developed. It was so exciting, but a lot for me to process. In Seattle I'd lived close to a Barnes & Noble store, so whenever I got my allowance I would buy MOJO. That was the wavelength I was on from the beginning, the content I was interested in and inspired by, so to actually be on the cover of MOJO was unbelievable. In the midst of all the madness, it was grounding to have my elder sister [former Seattle Weekly music writer Aja Pecknold] managing me as Fleet Foxes' profile grew. Fleet Foxes has always been her project as much as mine, actually, and we're still super-close.

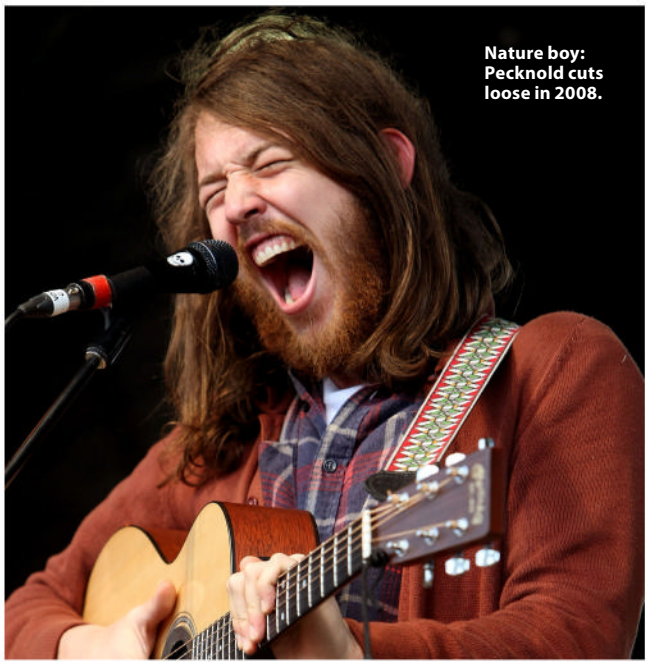
I'm not sure why the UK took us to their hearts first, but Your Protector was written on a trip to England me and my brother had in 2007. That "red squirrel in the morning…" bit that opens Sun It Rises was something we used to sing to each other walking in the Lake District.

I probably first realised fame could be a double-edged sword during a break between tours in 2008. I remember going to the grocery store in Seattle and for no reason some guys said [aggressively], "Oh, so you're a big shot now?" I was stunned that someone was ostracising me for something I didn't exactly will into being, but so it goes.

That early success and everything that's happened subsequently is an ongoing thing for me to negotiate. If I could go back and give my 22-year-old self some advice it would just be to enjoy it more. I'm mostly happy things happened the way they did, because when you're young there are a lot of ways in which the craziness doesn't matter. Maybe it's better to experience it early, rather than striving towards something late into your thirties that you think will solve all of your problems.

It has been tough too, though. There is something confounding about whether or not I still have the potential to make something better than *Fleet Foxes*, and if not, why not? There's some tension there for sure. I don't yet feel that I have made that thing that I can be most proud of, that one thing I'd share with my grandchildren. But maybe I will make that record one day, even if everything is on a smaller scale, and the satisfaction is on a more personal level.

As told to James McNair



Nature boy: Pecknold cuts loose in 2008.

Getty (2), Chris Taylor

Taking flight: Bill Callahan sees the bigger picture in 2009.

2009

The Zoom Out

With *Sometimes I Wish We Were An Eagle*, BILL CALLAHAN stepped back to go forward: "The goal was to see a bigger picture."

IT'S DEFINITELY a landmark for me because it has the most distinctive sound of any of my records. This was my first time working with [arranger] Brian Beattie, the first time I'd hired someone to do string and horn arrangements. Just the formality of that was something big, a new approach.

When I listened to it again this morning I was struck by how calm I sounded, which is good. I was reading a lot of [noir novelist] James M Cain at the time. I didn't know much about him or his personal life, so for the song Jim Cain I just started musing on what little I knew about him and tried to write a song from his perspective and my perspective blended together.

People are crazy about Too Many Birds so I guess I am too. That sounds flippant but it's not just me that has to keep a song alive. My youngest fans, including my kids, seem to really latch on to Too Many Birds. I've read a thousand children's books in the last few years and maybe "too many birds in one tree" has a simplicity to it like a kid's book.

"I think a lot of the record is about something dying, an idea of yourself or a vision of the future."

I think a lot of the record is about something dying, an idea of yourself dying or a vision of the future dying, in a bad and good way. All those painful false things that need to die. As huge as the last song Faith/Void is, there's the first blooms of spring there underneath the death of winter.

Was the title a wish for love? Yeah. My wife-to-be definitely heard this record and liked this record before I knew her, so a nice way of looking at the record is like the soil or seeds of the future. The goal was to have a distance on everything, to see a bigger picture. When I started out I was more about being sequestered and holding my cards close to my vest. I decided I could maybe get farther in life if I was more open.

I couldn't have gotten to where I am now without taking the path I took with …*Eagle*. In some ways, I was writing about things you can't have. "You can't have it!" is a good thing to tell yourself. But then it turns out you can, but maybe you have to tell yourself first that you can't. Really, it's just about being honest with yourself.

As told to Andrew Male

2010

Choose Life

On his crack solo debut *Queen Of Denmark*, facing up to who he was became a whole new career for ex-Czar JOHN GRANT.

I'D BEEN LIVING in New York, waiting tables and then working as a Russian medical interpreter. I thought music was over for me [after his stint in The Czars], that I didn't have what it took. I was still writing songs – I had Queen Of Denmark – and playing the odd show. But it all felt so depressing. I'd gotten sober in 2004, but I describe that as the spring thaw after winter. Under the ice is used condoms, dog turds and beer cans, and you spend the rest of your life trying to clear that up.

But Eric Pulido [of labelmates Midlake] kept poking at me: "Make a record down here with us in Denton, Texas, you're not done yet, we'll take care of you" – and they did. I can never thank them enough.

I had to go to [Grant's hometown] Denver at some point, where I met Charlie, who I ended up writing half the album about. I was in love, or infatuated, and the first new song was TC And Honeybear. But there was a lot of self-sabotage too. I named the album *Queen Of Denmark* because that was the strongest song – calling it Jesus Hates Faggots may have been a little too off-putting – but also, the line, "Who knows, maybe you'll get to be the next Queen Of Denmark," because I had no idea who I was going to become once I'd worked through everything – or what people would make of the record.

"I thought music was over for me, that I didn't have what it took."

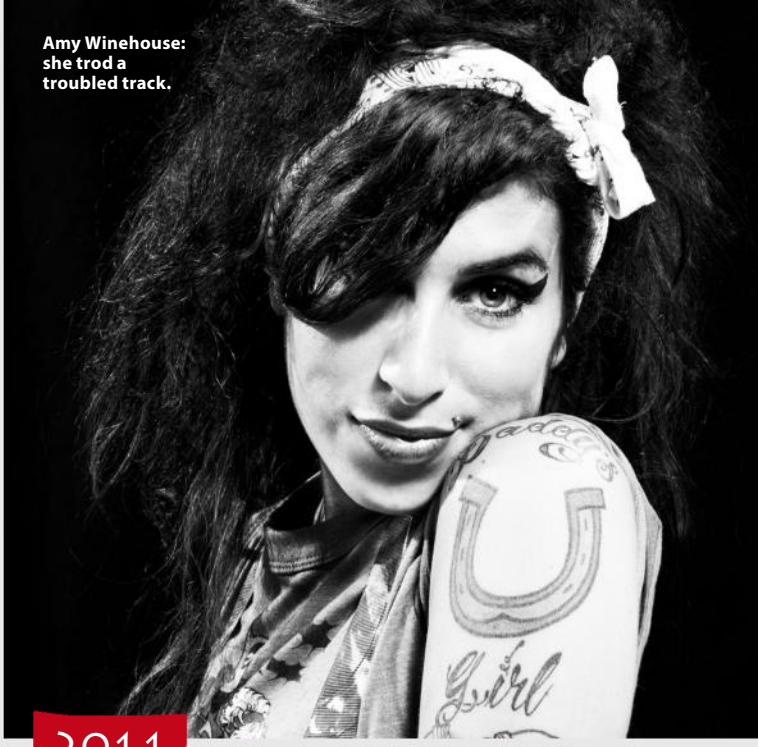
I moved back to Denver, and tried to fix the relationship with Charlie, and waited tables again. It was an incredibly dark time; I felt suicidal. But I assembled a band for touring – and then MOJO made *Queen Of Denmark* Album Of The Month. But I no longer had drink to help me on-stage, and singing is like facing yourself in the mirror. The first time I really felt validated was when MOJO made it Album Of The Year; that was monumental for me. And that has led me to places I never thought I'd go, or meet people I'd always wanted to.

When I think of *Queen Of Denmark* now, I feel melancholic, nostalgic, bittersweet, and incredibly joyful. I still love all the songs, and still play a lot of them. I also think of resurrection. And I now know what I'm going to become when I've worked through everything – a corpse! Because it's a life-long process.

As told to Martin Aston

Camera Press/Dean Chalkley

The resurrection of…: John Grant is "incredibly joyful" when looking back at *Queen Of Denmark*.



Amy Winehouse: she trod a troubled track.

2011

Fade To Black

The death of AMY WINEHOUSE stemmed an incredible talent on a tragic downward spiral. Her bassist/MD, Dale Davis, is still reeling.

AMY DIDN'T actually speak to me during my audition to play bass in her touring band in 2003, because she already knew who she wanted – and fancied! He'd worked with George Michael and Cliff Richard but he wanted too much money, so she had to go for the cheaper option: myself.

For me, the peak came a few weeks after I'd joined: Powis Square during the 2003 Notting Hill Carnival. It's a tough gig for a white act, but I couldn't believe how good she was – the crowd just grew and grew and grew as she played.

Touring was a happy ship, even when Amy's personal life became disruptive and there was chaos. At those moments, Amy was still so, so giving, but the burn-out came from many areas and while it didn't feel like it at the time, her decline happened so quickly, over just six months I'd say.

Musically, she burned out because she was always exploring. Every night, she'd sing the songs differently. I've never known anything like it. As a band we had to find the room for her to do that exploring.

"The point she couldn't come back from was her eating disorder. Her nervous system just gave up."

The point she couldn't come back from was her eating disorder. She'd eaten very healthily around [2003 debut album] *Frank*, but when she wasn't eating it became impossible to sustain her energy levels. People can do their partying, drinking, et cetera, but if they want to survive, they have to eat. Her nervous system just gave up and that's what finished her off.

The final gig in Belgrade [June 18, 2011] was the toughest night of my life. Even now I can't believe we were on-stage for an hour and 20 minutes. We were playing new territories because performances had become erratic. Amy wasn't ready to play a gig and she didn't want to be there and didn't want to sing the songs. That had never happened before, even when she was hurting or had had a drink. The band's spirit was broken: it felt like the end.

After that she became quite reclusive, but she'd still ring my then wife, just to talk or to ask about my son. We'd been out two nights before she died and she called on her last night [July 23]. We spoke a little, said we loved each other and promised to meet. I had no inkling we'd never speak again. Looking back, she was not designed to live long, but we're all to blame in some way for what happened.

As told to John Aizlewood

Interview courtesy of Amy Winehouse: In Her Words, published by HarperCollins. The Amy Winehouse Band plays Koko, London, December 22.

2012

It's Monk Time

From LEONARD COHEN's financial ruin sprang unforgettable shows and a landmark album: the funny, philosophical *Old Ideas*.

COHEN WAS 77 years old when he released *Old Ideas*. He was in his sixties, just a kid with a crazy dream, when his last studio album *Dear Heather* (2004) came out. A muted, elegant whisper of an album, it was treated by many music critics as Cohen's Last Words. Cohen showed no great interest in promoting it. He hated touring; the tour that had followed his then-best-selling album *The Future* (1992) was one reason that drove him to move into a monastery on Mount Baldy for five and a half years. Mostly he spent time in his homes in LA and Montreal, working on a book of poetry and writing songs, in his own good time.

It was just after his seventieth birthday and Cohen was in Canada when he got a frantic call from his daughter Lorca, in LA. She told him a friend of hers, who had dealings with Cohen's then-manager Kelley Lynch, had said to tell him to check his bank accounts, and quick. He did, and discovered that his manager had all but emptied them out. His only hope of replenishing those coffers was to tour – so he called bass player Roscoe Beck.

"He said he had been made an offer he couldn't refuse and he wanted me to help put a band together," said Beck, who first played with Cohen on the *Recent Songs* (1979) album and tour. Cohen appointed him the tour's musical director and Beck brought in musicians including Javier Mas, Sharon Robinson and the Webb Sisters.

Cohen, still apprehensive, would say, "Look, I don't know if I'm really going to do this. I hope you won't hold it against me if I decide to back out…"

What followed was Cohen's first tour in 15 years and one of the most financially successful tours of the time. Three years of three-hour-plus concerts with Cohen a Rat Pack rabbi in his suit and fedora, skipping on-stage, falling to his knees and holding his hat over his heart. The setlist included songs that Cohen was writing before the tour and that Beck had heard in their demo form – Amen, Lullaby and Banjo, previously known as Feels So Good. Cohen even wrote a new song, Darkness, during the tour.

"The notebook was always in his pocket," says Beck today. "It would come out on the plane. We could see things being written, occasionally hear bits of them backstage."

It was an energised and happy Cohen who went into the studio in LA with this touring band and recorded these songs and six more for his twelfth album. The discipline of the road, his familiarity with the musicians, the confidence that comes from one standing ovation after the next, all fed into the making of *Old Ideas*.

"But there's another major event that I should mention," says Beck. "When I got together with Leonard in 2007, I immediately noticed a change, which is that he really seemed to have come out of the depression that had dogged him his whole life. He told me at one point that this was the only time he had really enjoyed touring. He really was a different man."

Old Ideas was released in January 2012. It was Cohen's biggest hit record: Number 3 in the US, Number 2 in the UK, Number 1 in Canada and across Europe. He'd replenished his bank accounts and was raring to go back on the road. Two years short of 80, Cohen was at the top of his game.

Sylvie Simmons

"Leonard really seemed to have come out of the depression that had dogged him his whole life."

What's new, pussycat?: "Rat Pack rabbi" Leonard Cohen, at the top of his game in 2012.

Graeme Mitchell/Polaris/Eyevine

"They Asked Me, 'What Would Chic Do?'"

DAFT PUNK's *Random Access Memories* assembled a dream team of dance magi. "It's one and one equals three," reckons Nile Rodgers.

IN 1997, BARELY A YEAR AFTER THE death of his Chic partner Bernard Edwards, Nile Rodgers met Daft Punk's Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo at a New York listening party for their debut album, *Homework*. "They told me what big fans they were of Chic," Rodgers tells MOJO today, "and they made a point to tell me that *Homework* was a sort of quiet dedication to Bernard… That was so spiritually and artistically *next level* to me. I tried to track them down after that for many years."

When the mutual admirers did finally meet in a studio – at Electric Lady in Manhattan in 2012 – they recorded three songs for what would become 2013's *Random Access Memories*. Sung by Pharrell Williams, libidinous lead single Get Lucky was destined to be the inescapable soundtrack of summer 2013. "When we did it, they asked me, 'What would Chic do?'" says Rodgers, who declined to hear demos. "My guitar part is the beginning of a Chic record, and I grooved the way that I felt the groove should be played. Then Daft Punk had everybody else play to me. It wasn't that big of a deal at the time."

The garlanded French house music duo admitted to Rodgers they'd begun to find purely electronic production unsatisfying.

"The big takeaway I locked into was, they wanted it to be 'an album as if the internet never existed,'" says Rodgers. "To me that meant, people *playing* with each other. For the first time, they're going, 'Wow, what would a Daft Punk record be like with other people playing along with us?'"

"Other people" would turn out to be a pantheon of recording heavyweights including bassist Nathan East, drummer Omar Hakim and mastering engineer Bob Ludwig, plus Giorgio Moroder, Julian Casablancas and storied actor/songwriter Paul Williams, who starred in 1974's cult horror comedy Phantom Of The Paradise, which Daft Punk claimed to have watched 20 times. "We wrote the music and produced it almost like a movie director with actors," Bangalter told Dorian Lynskey in 2013, adding "human creativity is the ultimate interface."

Random Access Memories merged elegant soft rock and disco aesthetics, upholstered with vocoders, choirs, orchestra and the crispest, creamiest musicianship beamed from the '70s and '80s. Suitably for a concept piece about time, there's an undertow of elegy and yearning, as when Paul Williams' anguished Touch comes between the Rodgers/Pharrell party anthems Lose Yourself To Dance and Get Lucky. Meanwhile, the album's deft stylistic variations connect various eras of dance music, and epochs collide in unexpected ways.

"When you do something the other musician doesn't, it's one and one equals three," reasons Rodgers. "I think *Random Access Memories* is a perfect example of a lot of disparate artists bringing their 'A' game to a project and, all of a sudden, we have Daft Punk to the 10th power. It was amazing to see what happened with it."

After *Random Access Memories* hit Number 1 worldwide, Rodgers wanted to take the collaboration further, but the album was to be Daft Punk's swan song. Appearing as their robot avatars, the duo announced their dissolution in 2021 with a video of de Homem-Christo blowing up Bangalter in a kind of assisted robo-suicide. Their collaborator and guru wonders if this is really the end, though. "I like to believe in the mythology," says Rodgers. "That these robots had now interfaced with humans so much that they had become emotional beings. At a certain point in time, Guy-Man's going to become very lonely, and sad, walking the earth alone without that other robot."

Ian Harrison

"I like to believe in the mythology, that these robots had become emotional beings."

WENN.com, Shutterstock

Dance macabre: Daft Punk, with (right) human collaborator Nile Rodgers.

Drowned in sound: Scott Walker (second right) with Sunn O)))'s Stephen O'Malley (far right).

2014

"I Was Unbelievably Humbled"

SCOTT WALKER and dronelords Sunn O))) became one on the chilling *Soused*. Stephen O'Malley gives thanks.

I FIRST APPROACHED Scott in 2008 about working together on the Sunn O))) album *Monoliths And Dimensions*. Amazingly he actually responded to my letter and said, "I like your music."

He kept us in mind and at the end of 2013 I got a phone call from his manager. Scott sent us some demos with this little letter saying, "I'd be curious to see what you thought of these songs I wrote for you guys. I understand if you're not interested" (*laughs*). He really understood where we were coming from. A lot of the guitar riffs on the demos sounded like the Melvins.

Then everything happened really quickly. We got the demos in November and we were recording it [in Westpoint Recording Studios, London] in January. We decided to bring all our live backline into the studio and it was *tiny*. We stuffed all these amps into this tiny space. Scott showed up the next morning at 9.30am and we got at it right away. Sunn O)))'s amplitude had less importance to Scott than its *colour*. He was using us like a brass section. In Scott's terms they're quite compact pieces and that might be because the original commission was for an EP. Scott was using verse, choruses. Lyrically, they're song structures but there is some dark shit going on here. Child sacrifice, dark S&M stuff, deep compositional and conceptual layers.

"There is some dark shit going on here. Child sacrifice, S&M stuff, deep layers."

Scott knew his way around a studio. He's the only person I've met who recorded in studios every decade from the 1950s to the 2010s. He'd tell us about The Walker Brothers, how they'd play a show, drive to London in the morning, record two tracks, then go play three live shows. I'd say, "That's how Sunn O))) still work because we don't make any money. It's our DIY punk roots." He understood that. He was like, "Don't fuck around. What's the point?"

There was some talk of us playing live. At the end of the session he said, "[We've] got our band!" There were offers to play Carnegie Hall and we talked about doing another project but couldn't come to a consensus.

When Bowie's *Blackstar* dropped two years later, him recording with this small group in a really underground way, I remember thinking, I wonder if he was influenced by *Soused*, structurally, conceptually? I don't want to presume anything but here we have two gods of music who were constantly influencing each other and opening up their format to include some pretty extreme stuff.

I was unbelievably humbled by hearing what Scott had to say about *Soused* a few years later. He considered it one of his best records. That's amazing. It's definitely one of the peaks of my musical career.

As told to Andrew Male

2015

Black Arc

With *To Pimp A Butterfly*, KENDRICK LAMAR took hip-hop a level *deeper*. "He's a dramatist," says Shabaka Hutchings.

EVERYONE WAS talking about *To Pimp A Butterfly*, but I didn't check it out until all the media hype had died down. I remember thinking it's a really great record, a really deep record that I need to listen to more. It's so evocative, it's almost like Kendrick is rapping a book. I know he won the Pulitzer Prize with [follow-up album] *DAMN.* and this is the precursor to that with its overriding narrative – very complex, dense, nuanced – packaged within songs that have recognisable hooks, great beats and intimate musical collaborations.

Rappers have been using jazz instrumentalists for years, it's not necessarily a new thing. But what's remarkable is how detailed this is. It really feels like someone going into the studio and making a record *with* jazz musicians, rather than just using them to generate samples and loops. There's a lot of compositional detail that's often missing from hip-hop. It's a collaboration, a two-way flow of information, and you can hear that a lot of time, energy and focus has gone into its creation.

I still don't quite understand it. Kendrick has this ability to create layers and it's not easy to make written documents that opaque. You listen to it and you know that there's something below the surface. It's not directly accessible, everything is figurative, cloaked in symbolism and metaphor. For me his great skill is creating shadows within his music. He's a dramatist, giving a theatrical performance in character, with an arc that really darkens and complexifies towards the album's end.

"Kendrick is deep *within* the music, he's not just rapping over it."

Beyond that, there's his flow. I don't think I'd heard anything like For Free? before, where a rapper has completely flipped the cadence and changed the way the rhyme scheme goes towards jazz phrasing. You know this guy is deep *within* the music, he's not just rapping over another source of music.

My favourite track is The Blacker The Berry. It's got so many layers. It's bringing up the issue of blackness in its most stark, uncomfortable way, but in a way that's still easily digestible. Mortal Man is amazing too. Especially when he and 2Pac are letting the dead homies speak through them. It's a really deep sentiment and something that you don't often ascribe to hip-hop.

It's a watershed album. It not only brought radical black politics into the mainstream, in a way that was very commercial but uncompromising, it's the most realised, fully formed union of jazz and hip-hop there is.

As told to Andy Cowan

Phil Laslett, John Francis Peters/New York Times/Redux/Eyevine

Microphone fiend: Kendrick Lamar creates shadows within his music; (inset) Shabaka Hutchings.

"It's A Celebration Of Life, And A Farewell"

Blackstar arrived two days before its creator's shock departure. "In retrospect, it all makes sense," reflect DAVID BOWIE's last band.

FOR ALL HIS LIFE-AFFIRMING MOVES, David Bowie had always expressed awareness of mortality. Since the demise of Ziggy Stardust, he'd buried characters, and regularly covered Jacques Brel's My Death. The *Reality* album's title track in 2003 was a marker: "Now my death is more than just a sad song."

Surgery for a blocked artery in 2004 had pushed the singer into seclusion until a rebirth in 2013 with *The Next Day*. It was familiar terrain, recorded with his most recent touring band – perhaps too familiar, for what followed was a more characteristic step-change: a July 2014 session with Maria Schneider's contemporary jazz big band that resulted in the careering audio noir of Sue (Or In A Season Of Crime) and 'Tis A Pity She Was A Whore, released as a single in November. Bowie had embraced jazz before but never this freeform, with vocal and mood reminiscent of his hero, avant-garde stickler Scott Walker.

At the core of the Sue band were Schneider accomplices Donny McCaslin (saxophone), Mark Guiliana (drums) and Ben Monder (guitar) – a seasoned unit who could lock in tight but also take risks. "We reacted," says McCaslin, "with the courage to have the whole boat shift course on a dime."

When Bowie and producer Tony Visconti caught a smaller grouping – McCaslin and Guiliana plus Tim Lefebvre (bass) and Jason Lindner (keys) – at the 55 Bar club in Greenwich Village that June, they also clocked that these jazz players knew how to rock out. "When David saw us," says Lefebvre, "he heard how electric and aggressive we were – more than he anticipated – which really sold us to him."

By the time the singer and Visconti convened McCaslin, Guiliana, Lefebvre, Lindner and (eventually) Monder for three week-long sessions between January and March 2015, at New York studio Magic Shop, Bowie was undergoing chemotherapy for liver cancer. The musicians were informed, but he seemed otherwise strong and in good spirits. "This guy was indomitable," says Lefebvre.

As per Bowie's usual strategy, he wanted to see what his musicians could contribute, then react to it. "He said, 'I want you guys to go with whatever you're hearing; don't be inhibited,'" McCaslin recalls. Bowie would also sing to the band's live takes, "in the collaborative spirit of the moment," says Guiliana. "Given his energy and reactive vocal gestures, I assume what you hear on 'Tis A Pity… is his scratch vocal."

Both sides of the 2014 single were stripped down and re-recorded for *Blackstar*. In the meantime, Bowie and Visconti had fallen for Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp A Butterfly*. "It had jazz guys on it," says Lefebvre, "with different perspectives on how to play a song."

"He said, 'I want you guys to go with whatever you're hearing; don't be inhibited.'"

BOWIE'S CHEMOTHERAPY WAS ONGOING AS recording continued. Not that band members had an inkling of what Lefebvre calls the "tinges of imminent death" in the lyrics (notably "Look up here, I'm in heaven" in Lazarus). Guiliana remembers "mumbles and wordless melodies" on the demos Bowie presented before each session. "I'm not a lyric person anyway, I react to feelings," says McCaslin. "As we recorded Lazarus and David was singing on the other side of the clear glass from me, I closed my eyes and tried to imagine the sax being a pillow around him."

Once again, Bowie had unearthed musicians to best express his vision, in music that could mirror anger and joy, despair and tenderness. Meanwhile, under a new kind of pressure, he'd found imaginative and profound melodies and words rife with clues and confessions. The variety of rhythmic approaches – the driving grooves of Sue and 'Tis A Pity; Girl Loves Me's staccato beats – masked the fact that the album is largely a succession of ballads, aching and searching, that conclude with elegiac Dollar Days and wistful I Can't Give Everything Away, a message to his audience as pointed as *Ziggy Stardust*'s Rock'n'Roll Suicide. Its harmonica recalls *Low*'s A New Career In A New Town, whilst Monder's guitar solo echoes Mick Ronson and Robert Fripp. "There are a lot of allusions to his past on *Blackstar*," says Monder, "but presented in a fresh context."

However, the fate of the tracks was still not clear to Bowie's band. "Would there even be a record?" wondered McCaslin.

Bowie and Visconti hunkered down to complete, and finesse, *Blackstar*, giving it both steeliness and warmth. Around November, a couple of the players were summoned to hear the record. "David was supposed to be there," says Lefebvre, but he failed to show. Having been in remission during the summer, Bowie had recently been told that his condition was terminal.

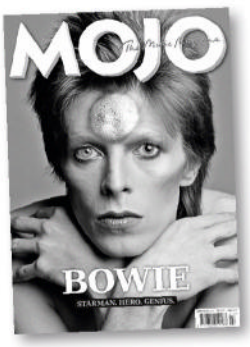
Upon its release on January 8, 2016, the world only had two days to digest *Blackstar* before news of Bowie's death. "It still crushes me," says Lefebvre, speaking on behalf of all Bowie fans. Guiliana agrees, "but it makes me happy as well as sad, and feeling overwhelming gratitude that *Blackstar* exists."

"In retrospect, it all makes sense, even without being aware of the lyrics," says Monder. "There is this amazing balance between darkness and hope. It's simultaneously a celebration of life, and a farewell."

Although it's hard to view *Blackstar* except through the filter of Bowie's death, in truth a work so rich, dynamic and expressive also lives outside of its context.

"It's a piece of high art where different elements combined in a seamless way," says McCaslin. "It's such a *deep* record, which speaks to the core of humanity."

Martin Aston



Getty

Heaven down there: Brixton's David Bowie mural becomes a shrine, January 2016.

2017

"We Felt A Lot Of Pressure"

LCD SOUNDSYSTEM's unexpected *American Dream* comeback didn't just surprise fans. "It was a genuine shock to me," says James Murphy lieutenant Al Doyle.

EVERYONE OUTSIDE of the band thought the news that we were making more music [following the band's split in 2011] was an elaborate ruse, but it was a genuine shock to me. James works relatively slowly, and he found it distracting to work in New York, with interruptions from his other projects, so he escaped to my studio in London [Doyle is also a member of Hot Chip], which was embryonic at that point but then this huge pallet of gear arrived, all wrapped up, from James!

James demands total commitment – he's always switched on – but making *American Dream* was very enjoyable, and really exciting. Over time, he's retreated from working with a full band to more solo-y stuff, but I have quite a complementary skill set, and I can play some things that he can't, like fiddly bits of guitar, strings and percussion, so I just fitted alongside and didn't worry about what I was contributing. One of my suggestions was the big bass sound on Tonite.

"The record has this thrilling forward movement, like driving down the I-5 with the top down."

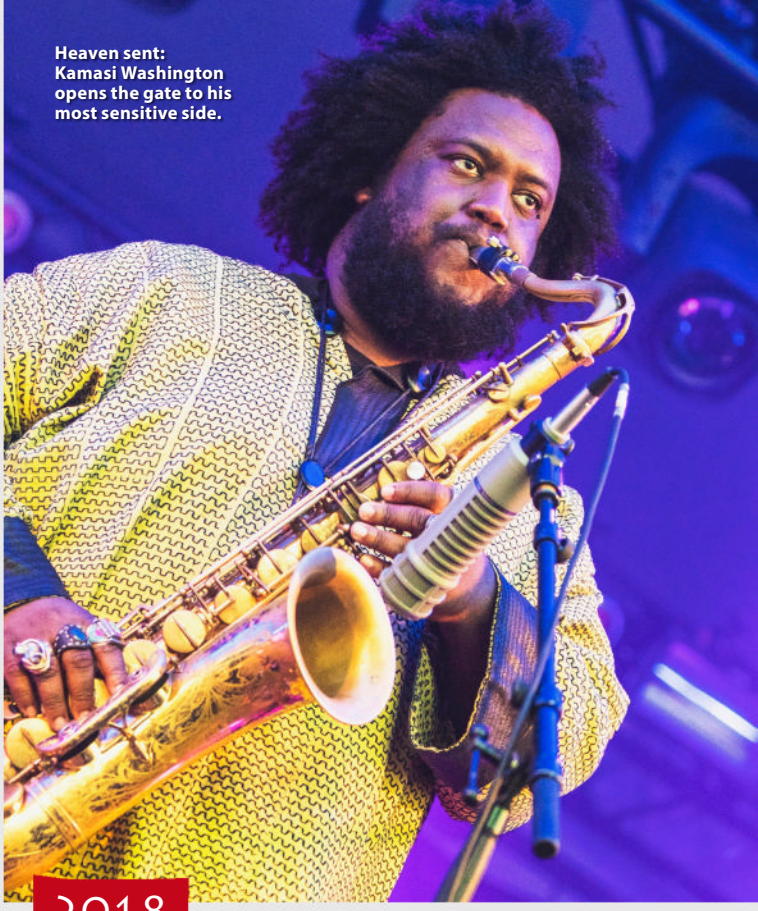
I don't know if it was intentional, but *American Dream* ended up sounding expansive and widescreen. To me, Oh Baby suggests the opening shot of a movie, a cityscape with a helicopter; How Do You Sleep? is almost PiL-sounding, dark and brooding with filmic imagery. The record has this thrilling, propulsive, forward movement, like driving down the I-5 California highway with the top down, exerting a little extra pressure on the accelerator. But something like Black Screen is much more personal, about James exploring working with David Bowie and then processing Bowie's death. I only heard the lyric and the finished song back in New York, and I was overwhelmed by how emotional that track became. Change Yr Mind seems very Bowie to me too.

I'm very proud of *American Dream*, and I'm proud for James too. I can't speak for James, but the band felt a lot of pressure, given the big deal about going away before. Anything other than being even better than we were before would have felt like a poor showing. But it was so well received. Some of those songs have really been taken to heart, especially live, which is a huge vindication. I'm really pleased it's become part of the fabric of the 2010s; it's still got that life even now.

As told to Martin Aston

Getty

LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy: keeping the dream alive.



Heaven sent: Kamasi Washington opens the gate to his most sensitive side.

2018

Above And Beyond

KAMASI WASHINGTON on how his epic *Heaven And Earth* transcended jazz's fanbase: "Your art doesn't have to be boxed or shaped to fit."

2018 WAS a great year. We had a little space in the middle of touring to record *Heaven And Earth* and felt good about where we were musically. Music evolves and it changes as you change, it's almost seasonal, like when the pineapples are ripe or something. I had a lot of songs written but my music can be a bit of a mystery, so when we start playing it can take a little time to figure out what the song really wants to be.

We recorded for about two weeks. It was pretty hectic. We were in the studio 10 or 12 hours a day with a super-intense focus. We don't do a lot of takes and it either works or it doesn't. So someone might play something in the intro that really makes the song beautiful, but if I botch my solo we lose *all* of it. And because the songs are not set in stone, you have to be able to react in the moment. It has to *feel* natural.

"In South Central Los Angeles, we were told that we weren't making music that would reach places."

I always try to make the music that I'm feeling in my heart and let the chips fall where they fall. It's like you're exposing your spirit in a way. You're opening the gate to your most sensitive part and letting everyone look at it. So when people started resonating with it, it felt good. But being crowned the figurehead of the jazz revival was strange. I'm a fan of many great musicians, and just see myself as part of a movement. I'm not trying to be anything other than who I am.

We did more shows than I've ever done in one year in 2018. We had lots of amazing moments, going places I never imagined going. We had one show at this amphitheatre in Italy that was so remote, I was thinking, Where are the people even going to come from? They literally started walking out of the forest.

It was amazing to get MOJO Album Of The Year – especially making jazz the way we do. When we were kids, practising and playing in South Central Los Angeles, we were told that we weren't making music that would reach places. So it was a real affirmation that if you believe in yourself, your art will become a true form of expression. It doesn't have to be boxed or shaped to fit some kind of preconceived norm.

As told to Andy Cowan

2019

The Impossible Realm

On *Ghosteen*, NICK CAVE found a language for grief and a map for creative progress: "On some level, I don't feel responsible for those songs."

MADE JUST THREE years after the death of his son Arthur, aged 15, *Ghosteen* is a record that was created in what Nick Cave calls the "impossible realm" of grief, loss and spiritual intensity. In Faith, Hope And Carnage, the book of conversations I had with Cave in 2020, he described that rarefied place as "a liminal state of awareness, before dreaming, before imagining, where glimpses of the preternatural essence of things find their voice."

Imbued throughout with Arthur's hovering presence, the album is a ghostly, shimmering thing of fragile beauty. It emerged from prolonged studio sessions in which Cave, in the company of his longtime friend and collaborator, Warren Ellis, jettisoned his narrative songwriting style for a more impressionistic approach. Although Cave had reinvented himself before, most notably on 1997's calmly devotional album *The Boatman's Call*, *Ghosteen* is a truly audacious creative rebirth, a record so palpably religious in aspect that one would have to look beyond the rock canon towards the likes of Alice Coltrane's spiritual explorations to find a parallel in terms of its otherworldly atmosphere.

Cave and Ellis started sketching songs for the record in Brighton in early 2018, but it wasn't until they reconvened in Chris Martin's home studio in Malibu a few months later that they became locked into an improvisational way of working that the singer later described as "intense" and "mystifying". The process often involved him discarding lyrics he had spent months writing and finessing, and instead responding to Ellis's circular electronic loops and ambient soundscapes by singing phrases and words from his subconscious. It was a journey into an unknown place, uncertain and liberating. "The engagement was intense," Ellis told me in 2021. "We just lived it."

You can hear the hum of intensity on the tracks Ghosteen Speaks and Hollywood, one intimate, the other epic and almost hallucinatory in its extravagant imagery. On the former, Cave repeats the lines "I am beside you" and "Look for me", over a ghostly, electronically-distorted vocal refrain. The grain of his voice transforms the plaintive, if relatively simple, lyric into a quietly insistent mantra, part-prayer, part statement of defiance in the face of grief's capsizing sway.

For Spinning Song, Cave and Ellis edited together three different parts of an extended improvisation, creating a shifting, non-linear narrative that culminates with Cave singing the simplest, most well-worn of lines – "Peace will come" – over and over, perhaps the most affecting moment on an album that constantly attempts to express the ineffable. "On some deep level," Cave told me, "I somehow don't feel responsible for those songs. When I listen to them, I almost feel that someone else, or *something* else, is speaking."

Unsurprisingly, *Ghosteen* is a record that insists on a state of deep, attentive listening, so intimate and elevated is the sustained atmosphere. It no doubt challenged many of Cave's longtime fans, just as it momentarily unsettled its co-creator, the usually unflappable Warren Ellis. "As a musician, I always feel like the best is coming," he told me later. "My hope is to do something really good one day. So, *Ghosteen* threw me. It just felt like the record I always wanted to make. I just thought, How can we ever crawl out from underneath that? It really spooked me."

That, in itself, is a testament to *Ghosteen*'s beautiful otherness, its transportive power and singular beauty. It set Nick Cave on another path, where, as attested by the ensuing album, 2021's *Carnage*, the song has become a more malleable, experimental and wildly expressive medium. Or, as he puts it, "Just by being open to all these other possibilities, you become a conduit for something else, something surprising, to happen."

Sean O'Hagan

"The process often involved Cave discarding lyrics he had spent months finessing."

Spirit walker: Nick Cave took a journey into an unknown place on *Ghosteen*.

Kerry Brown

"It Was Pure Blind Mysticism"

Ace keysman Benmont Tench's inside track on the Tao of BOB DYLAN's *Rough And Rowdy Ways*. "It's a deep and beautiful record."

OVER THE COURSE OF 40 years, I've been in the studio with Bob a few times. I worked on [1981's] *Shot Of Love*, worked a little on *Empire Burlesque* [1985], there's a track or two on *Knocked Out Loaded* [1986], and I played on the Gods And Generals soundtrack. When I first played with him, I was like, *Holy shit – that's Bob Dylan!* This time, I went in and saw him and said, "Hey Bob, good to see you." Still, it's Bob Dylan.

That also means you know there's going to be great songs. And as soon as you hear the song that's all you can focus on. That's true whether it's Bob or The Rolling Stones or whoever. It doesn't matter how deep a groove you play, or how intricate your stuff is, if you don't have the songs – and nobody's got songs like Dylan.

With Bob, he doesn't usually give me anything specific to play. On occasion he asks me to play piano and he shows me what he has in mind. I'll try to do it, but he's very idiosyncratic and he's a great piano player himself, so he winds up playing it, and I wind up playing organ. And that's how I prefer it!

For this record, I got a call out of the blue. [Guitarist] Blake Mills gave me a heads up… and they asked me to come down to Sound City studio [in Los Angeles]. I went in and, man, what a great band: Charlie Sexton, Tony Garnier, Matt Chamberlain, and Blake, who was tracking with them too. I played Hammond on Key West (Philosopher Pirate). I just wanted to be ambient. I wanted to be the breeze blowing through.

That same day they were listening to some track and Bob said, "Play him that long one, but just play him a little bit" – and it was Murder Most Foul, but in the end they let it play all the way through. I mean, what can you say after you hear something like that?

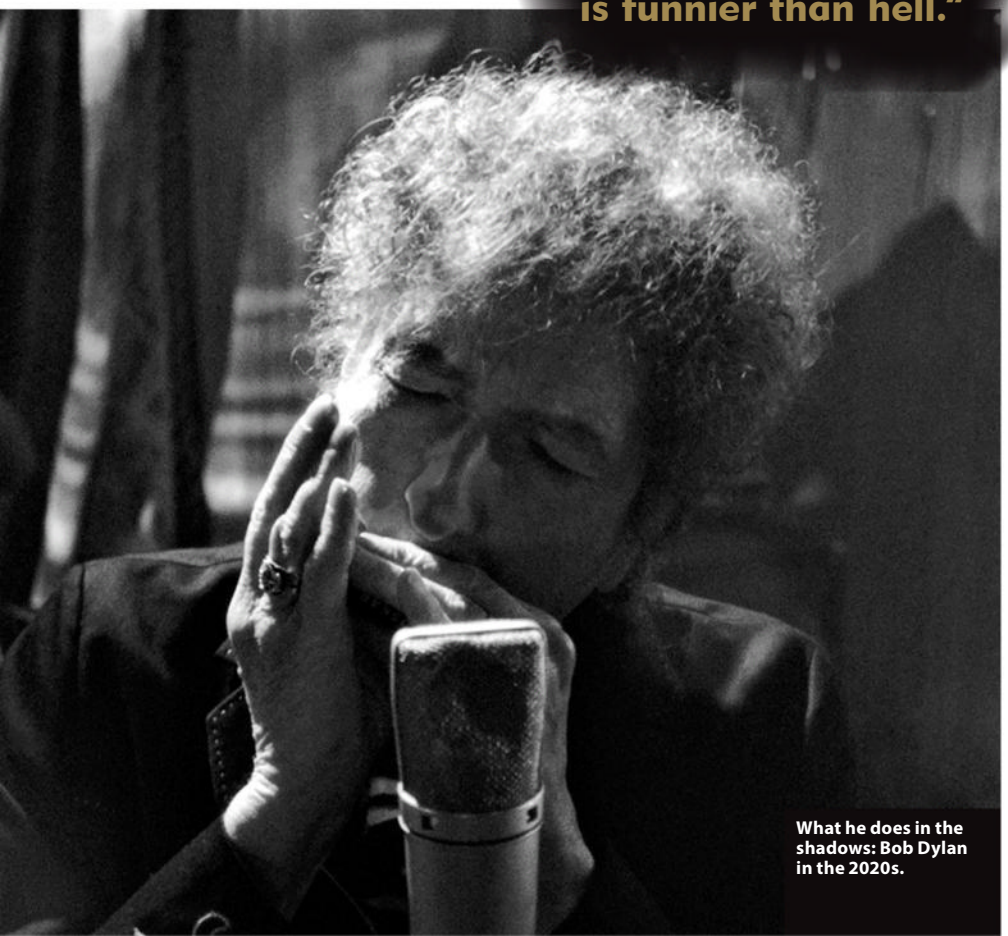
Maybe a month later they called me back to play on it. They had Alan Pasqua to play piano on it, and Fiona Apple – who is a great piano player – had already played on the track. And if you listen to that song, there's no time [signature]. So we're in there overdubbing to I don't know what. I'm watching Bob because he's there conducting us as he sings – saying go here, or go there, and doing all that with a gesture. At the end of the day it becomes this gorgeous song. That's the best kind of musical experience – pure blind mysticism. I don't know how that worked, but it worked.

To me, *Rough And Rowdy Ways* is a really deep and beautiful record – and funny. That's one thing that I really love about Bob Dylan: he is funnier than hell. Just the line "Goodbye Jimmy Reed… Jimmy Reed indeed!", that rhyme makes me smile. Also, he's a very moving songwriter. If I were to compare this record to anything it would be *Shot Of Love*, the first album I played on. It had that kind of feel, especially these slow and moodier songs that felt along the lines of Every Grain Of Sand.

There are many functions of art. Art is supposed to elevate you, make you laugh, make you cry, make you crazy, make you full of lust, full of love, make you angry. Well, you want to see an artist? Look at Bob Dylan and listen to *Rough And Rowdy Ways* – which is what I'm going to do soon as I get off the phone with you!

As told to Bob Mehr

"That's one thing that I really love about Bob Dylan: he is funnier than hell."



Claire Anders

What he does in the shadows: Bob Dylan in the 2020s.

Contrarily yours: Lana Del Rey's story comes around.

2021

Viva La Diva

Chemtrails Over The Country Club confirmed LANA DEL REY's dedication to telling her complicated truth, damn the torpedoes.

"I KNOW EVERYBODY has a story, but I'm really looking forward to my story being the one I say it is," sighed Lana Del Rey to MOJO in 2021, "not just one that people make up." Ever since 2011 debut Video Games, Del Rey had been subject to insinuation and speculation about her "authenticity"; by seventh album *Chemtrails Over The Country Club*, she was locked into an antagonistic two-step with social media, exacerbated by May 2020's notorious "question for the culture" Instagram post, in which she suggested she had been treated unfairly compared to other female pop stars.

Del Rey's status should have been bolted down – "Lana raised us," Billie Eilish said, capturing Del Rey's influence – but she's too mercurial to stay in place. The end-days Americana and personal apocalypse of 2019's *Norman Fucking Rockwell!* fired her creative reputation but it also became something to live up to – something Del Rey wasn't sure *Chemtrails Over The Country Club*'s brilliant bricolage managed. "It wasn't so much that I thought the songs fantastically fit together with, like, seamless sunkissed production," she said, "but you know, there's a life lived in there." More than one, maybe, as lyrics paid tribute to foremothers Joni Mitchell, Joan Baez, Tammy Wynette and Courtney Love.

In October 2021, *Blue Banisters* was downsizing and deck clearance (take a second to admire Sweet Carolina's scything "'Crypto forever!' screams your stupid boyfriend/Fuck you, Kevin"). It was this year's *Did You Know That There's A Tunnel Under Ocean Blvd*, however, that saw Del Rey stretch out again to full startling capacity. The long dark trip-hop night of A&W; heart-wrecking confessional Fingertips; the legacy-mashing Taco Truck x VB – this was a record that further dissolved the thin membrane between Del Rey, her art and her audience.

"I've been an open book and I've shared my whole soul and I've done it for free."

Controversy endures, though. Arriving late on-stage at this summer's Glastonbury, her set was cut off – avoidable, but also the kind of ethereal contrarianism that ensures she's an eternal question mark. "I definitely trust my muse," she told MOJO. "It takes such a long time sometimes to see what it's getting at, where it's going." Follow her – in a white Mustang, maybe, from California to Brooklyn (baby) – and the destination is likely to be spectacular. "I've been an open book and I've shared my whole soul and I've done it for free," she said. "I've done it knowing it would be fruitless. But I believe in persistence. The thing about being honest and persistent – eventually, if it's important to you, your story comes around." Nobody tells it quite like this.

Victoria Segal

2022

Dream On!

The astonishing vertical take-off of Dave Grohl favourites WET LEG, through the still-wide eyes of singer-guitarist Rhian Teasdale.

2022 FEELS LIKE a long time ago, and it feels like no time at all. We'd only had two singles out – Chaise Longue then Wet Dream – and then all of a sudden we were touring around the UK in a Mercedes Vito van. We only played our first shows out of the UK in November 2021.

We were shooting the video for Ur Mum in February 2022. It was a really special shoot for us – with the right collaborators and everything feeling bigger and more cinematic – and someone said, "Oh, have you seen Dave Grohl saying that he's into Wet Leg?" Me and [co-writer/guitarist] Hester [Chambers] were in the back of a car, watching this video, and the words "Wet Leg" came out of Dave Grohl's mouth.

At the time I don't think we realised what it meant to play The Park Stage at Glastonbury. I'd only been once before; the rest of the band hadn't ever been. And it wasn't until people showed me footage of it afterwards that I realised the crowd went all the way back towards the Crow's Nest at the top of the hill. After we got off-stage, I remember giving everyone a big hug. Then we probably went and set up our tent.

"Hester runs into the room all out of breath and just leaps into Dave Grohl's arms!"

It's very cool to have people like Dave Grohl being excited about what you're making, because you know there are plenty of people on the internet who are *not* very excited and really hate it. We met him at a show when we were supporting Harry Styles in LA. Dave came backstage with his daughters. I was in the dressing room when our tour manager said, "Dave Grohl's here to see you." What?! I went next door to say hi, whereas the rest of the band had gone out for a cigarette. They come running back, but the venue is so big they got lost. Finally, Hester runs into the room all out of breath and just leaps into Dave Grohl's arms! (*Puts on squeaky voice*) "Hi, I'm Hester, so pleased to meet you!"

If we get to steal all of Harry Styles' fan base, that would be great, because they are so lovely. It sounds weird to say, but I'd never played in front of so many women. Nor at the gigs that I would go to, little indie sweatbox gigs, I never really noticed how few women were in the audience. Now I realise what I was missing. It's just the best.

As told to Jenny Bulley

Out on a limb: Wet Leg's Rhian Teasdale (left) and Hester Chambers.

Charlie Grant, Mattia Zoppellaro

MOJO at 30

MOJO PRESENTS

Who will be the enduring stars of MOJO in 2053? We pick 30 key artists to sustain us through the next 30 years.

Portrait by **BETH GARRABRANT**

TAYLOR SWIFT

"Long story short – I survived," Taylor Swift sings on *Evermore*, one of two albums she released in 2020. Chronicling the toughest patches of being "young and reckless" has been integral to her high-drama mission since she emerged into the Nashville country scene as a teenager – even The Outside, from 2006's self-titled debut, was about her taste for singing country music in karaoke bars isolating her from a more age-appropriate world of sleepovers.

When it comes to her 18-year career, though, Swift has done so much more than simply survive. She burst into modern pop with the fabulous post-teenage symphonies of 2014's *1989* and 2017's fierce *Reputation*. She tapped back into her roots for 2020's *Folklore* and *Evermore*, working with The National's Aaron Dessner, before the cool insomniac pop of 2022's *Midnights*. Yet as Swift smartly pointed out in Lana Wilson's 2020 documentary Miss Americana, reinvention isn't the end. "Female artists have to reinvent themselves so many more times than male artists, or else you're out of a job," she said. "Live out a narrative that we find interesting enough to entertain us, but not so crazy that it makes us uncomfortable."

Instead, Swift has adjusted the idea of the pop star to fit her as she grows up, shaking it up as she shakes it off. In 2019, when the masters of her first six albums were sold away from under her, she re-recorded them in 'Taylor's Version' form, a Director's Cut complete with new guests and 'From The Vaults' additions, a fluid evolutionary move that lines her up with the bootlegs and archives of an older generation. "If I made them the first time, I can make them again," she shrugged, with the nonchalance of her iciest vengeance songs.

Swift understands her value and the value of her work. Her ongoing Eras Tour is a serious acknowledgement of her pivots and shifts, each three-hour show featuring 44 songs split into 10 acts. It underscores the idea of Swift as a millennial Springsteen, elevating the tender crash-and-burn yearnings of American life to epic status.

It is the songwriting that makes Swift's long-term future so intriguing. "People have essentially gotten to read my diary for the last 10 years," she said in 2014, and it's easy to be there for the drama of *1989*'s Blank Space ("It'll leave you breathless/Or with a nasty scar"). Always a sharp narrator with a gift for the extended metaphor (see *Reputation*'s Getaway Car), Swift's storytelling skills have accelerated – just listen to *Evermore*'s cold-lipped Tis The Damn Season, a heartbreaking Going Home For Christmas song that condenses a whole indie film into its winter breakdown, or Maroon's crying over spilt wine.

"I haven't met the new me yet," she sings on *Evermore*'s Happiness, a song about the skin-shedding that comes with the end of a long-term relationship. It's also a line that speaks to her inherent sense that life is a glorious work in progress – romantically, emotionally, creatively. The story of her next 30 years is one nobody will be cutting short.

Victoria Segal ➢

Beth Garrabrant

For evermore: Taylor Swift, creating the best version of herself.

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Future facing: (clockwise from left) Fatoumata Diawara, Idles, Brittany Howard, Michael Kiwanuka, Phoebe Bridgers.

"ANGER IS AN ENERGY BUT IDLES' PUNK EPIPHANIES ALSO HAVE A PERSONAL DEPTH AND INTEGRITY."

AROOJ AFTAB

A 2007 cover of Hallelujah on YouTube provided an early indication of this Saudi-born, Pakistan-raised, Brooklyn-based artist's powers. Sixteen years later, Aftab has a Grammy Award for Best Global Music Performance, and a musical remit that can encompass jazz (see her 2023 album with Vijay Iyer and Shahzad Ismaily), ambient electronica, the melancholy power of Qawwali and Ghazal traditions, and more. All with a voice of calm gravitas and beauty comparable to Cocteau Twin Elizabeth Fraser.
Start with: *Vulture Prince* (NEW AMSTERDAM, 2021)

ARCTIC MONKEYS

An odd choice, perhaps, given Arctic Monkeys' significant impact (four cover stories) on MOJO's first 30 years. Worth remembering, though, that none of the quartet are yet 40, and that their last two albums – especially 2022's career standout *The Car* – have suggested a band just entering their mature phase. A further intriguing sub-plot: how will Alex Turner negotiate his time in the spotlight, as he finesses his Jean-Claude Vannier orchestrations, Mick Ronson solos and cinematographer's eye – as the frontman of a stadium rock band, or as an ever-more complex solo artist?
Start with: *The Car* (DOMINO, 2022)

BIG THIEF

Part indie rock powerhouse, part millennial hippy outliers, the Berklee-schooled quartet have parlayed salon chops into an organic sound, with roots in folk but enough heft to fill increasingly big spaces. Three-quarters of Big Thief – Adrianne Lenker, Buck Meek and James Krivchenia – also have active solo careers, but that never detracts from a band whose intuitive closeness is critical to their appeal. "It's like being married to three people," bassist Max Oleartchik told MOJO in 2019. "Like a cult, but in a positive way."
Start with: *Dragon New Warm Mountain I Believe In You* (4AD, 2022)

Kyle Gustafson, Rachael Wright, Mattia Zoppellaro, Andrew Cotterill, Frank Ockenfels

BLACK COUNTRY, NEW ROAD

This decade has seen a clutch of British bands (notably Black Midi, Squid, Caroline) who've accommodated prog and post-rock into their ever-evolving sound. None, though, have capitalised on flux as effectively as BC, NR, whose initial manifestation as a kind of klezmer Slint was halted with the departure of *Sprechgesanger* Isaac Wood. Undaunted, the band now privilege four lead singers and a boundless sense of possibilities, both inside the collective and out: witness Georgia Ellery's flourishing side-project, Jockstrap, who sound roughly like baroque folk pop remixed by the Aphex Twin.
Start with: *For The First Time* (NINJA TUNE, 2021)

BLACK PUMAS

Eric Burton and Adrian Quesada's Black Pumas make the cut here just ahead of other nu-soul contenders like Durand Jones & The Indications and Gabriels, thanks not just to the honours heaped on the Austin duo since 2019 – Grammy nominations, a spot on Joe Biden's inauguration show – but also the way they run retro R&B moves through a kaleidoscopic modern psychedelic filter. Forthcoming second album *Chronicles Of A Diamond* is an object lesson in how to honour vintage soul without sounding stuck in the past.
Start with: *Black Pumas* (ATO, 2019)

PHOEBE BRIDGERS

A recurring theme in this list is of multi-tasking, multi-hyphenate artists whose cultural imprints are increasingly seen through an accumulation of different projects. Witness Californian Bridgers, 29, whose solo career – wherein she reframes '90s college alt-rock for a massive modern pop audience – is currently parked as she focuses on running a label (Saddest Factory) and figuring as one-third of indie supergroup Boygenius alongside Lucy Dacus and Julien Baker. A radical, poignant and extremely funny voice of a generation.
Start with: *Punisher* (DEAD OCEANS, 2020)

LANA DEL REY

"Fame can put you on the peripheries, where the vultures can pick at you," Lana Del Rey told MOJO in 2020. Such is the genius of LDR, mainstream superstar and transgressive *auteur*; a singer-songwriter who simultaneously embodies Hollywood Technicolor and its weirder underside. A torch singer with blood ties to country melodrama and Mazzy Star anomie, her story only gets more fascinating: few contemporary artists can elide high-concept roleplay into candid confessionals so elegantly.
Start with: *Norman Fucking Rockwell!* (POLYDOR, 2019)

FATOUMATA DIAWARA

Fatoumata Diawara's eclectic spirit has ranged across continents and genres at will this past decade, straddling high-spec French electronic pop, Cuban jazz, Laurel Canyon singer-songwriting, US R&B and multiple projects with Damon Albarn. At heart, though, the Wassoulou singer – a former backing vocalist for Oumou Sangaré – is one of those rare artists who can respect and transcend her musical roots; a global star to satisfy both scholars of Malian tradition and a mainstream ignorant of it.
Start with: *Fenfo (Something To Say)* (WAGRAM, 2018)

DRY CLEANING

"People say, 'You're like the woman on the satnav,'" Florence Shaw ruefully told MOJO in 2022. But that deadpan surrealism, her skill at finding emotional valency in a bricolage of found words, has helped elevate Dry Cleaning onto a different level from most of their nouveau post-punk contemporaries. A great *band*, too: their melodic progress to 2022's *Stumpwork* bodes well for the future. A London art school Sonic Youth, anyone?
Start with: *Stumpwork* (4AD, 2022)

FLOATING POINTS

A cratedigging electronica maven and DJ with close ties to Four Tet, Sam 'Floating Points' Shepherd would excel on his techno excursions alone. It's his constantly expanding vision which tantalises most, though, touching on Pink Floyd-style space rock (2017's *Reflections – Mojave Desert*) before *Promises*, a ravishing ambient-jazz collaboration with Pharoah Sanders and the London Symphony Orchestra, was selected as MOJO's Album Of The Year for 2020. Where he goes next is unclear, but thrilling.

Start with: *Promises* (LUAKA BOP, 2020)

FONTAINES D.C.

Another band with a tireless energy to reshape themselves, Dubliners Fontaines D.C. could rest easy as the pre-eminent rabble-rousing indie rockers of the 2020s. But over three albums, they've already shown options beyond the anthems: a penchant for Cure introspection; a Poguesy, literary take on Irish tradition (see also drummer Tom Coll's folk label, Skinty). Like Arctic Monkeys, the band's future may depend on how they accommodate the ambitions of their frontman. Grian Chatten's 2023 solo album, *Chaos For The Fly*, foregrounded chamber pop further at odds with the ramalams.

Start with: *Skinty Fia* (PARTISAN, 2022)

BRITTANY HOWARD

When Alabama Shakes arrived with a bang in 2012, their shtick – Stax meets Southern-flavoured garage rock, basically – seemed inspired, but limited. Howard, though, soon found a way out of the format, first on their 2015 farewell, *Sound & Color*, then on 2019 solo debut, *Jaime*. Howard isn't just a formidable singer, but a questing Afrofuturist musician, too, who can channel a folksy Curtis Mayfield, or a hyper-funky Prince, without ever sublimating her own distinct take on religion, racism, sexuality and the state of America.

Start with: *Jaime* (ATO, 2019)

SHABAKA HUTCHINGS

The poster boy for new British jazz is currently at a crossroads: in July he announced he was quitting the saxophone at the end of 2023. That trademark honk which has energised Sons Of Kemet, The Comet Is Coming and myriad other projects might be retired – after an LA performance of Floating Points' *Promises*. Nevertheless, Hutchings' drive as musician, label boss, avant-hip-hop producer (the forthcoming Kofi Flexxx album) and community organiser remains undimmed: the most prominent player of the shakuhachi bamboo flute over the next 30 years, almost certainly.

Start with: Sons Of Kemet – *Your Queen Is A Reptile* (IMPULSE!, 2018)

IDLES

"Intense as fuck," was how producer Nick Launay described working with the Bristol band to MOJO in 2021, comparing them to former clients Lou Reed, Nick Cave and John Lydon. Anger is unquestionably an energy here, as Joe Talbot rails against the iniquities of modern Britain. But Talbot is unflinchingly aware of his own fallibility, too, so that Idles' crunching punk epiphanies have a personal depth and integrity: full of sound and fury, but signifying something crucial.

Start with: *Ultra Mono* (PARTISAN, 2020)

KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD

In the unlikely but tantalising event King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard keep up their current work rate (24 albums since 2012) for the next 30 years, they'll release 70 more albums in that time. A hyperactive, many-tentacled Aussie phenom, the Gizz's manic creativity can unite both garage rock and jam band tribes, even as they shoehorn thrash metal, Anatolian psych, prog and whatever else takes their fancy into one infinite, spectacular groove.

Start with: *Nonagon Infinity* (FLIGHTLESS, 2016)

KENDRICK LAMAR

Debates around the musical importance of hip-hop should've ended well before MOJO's inception in 1993. Still, Kendrick Lamar's 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Music (the first non-classical, non-jazz recipient) felt like a high water mark. Fundamental to his genius is the way his dense, conscious raps are matched by music of equivalent breadth and complexity, locating him as a cutting-edge artist as well as one in a continuum of African-American visionaries. A recent example: 2022 single, The Heart Part 5, riding a sample of Marvin Gaye's I Want You.

Start with: *To Pimp A Butterfly* (TOP DAWG, 2015)

MICHAEL KIWANUKA

A White Stripes fan at school, Londoner Michael Kiwanuka's musical epiphany came when a friend played him MOJO's *Soul Riot* comp from 2001, drawn into a world of studio magic by some chat before an outtake of (Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay. Three albums of profound symphonic soul have made good on those historic antecedents: an artist who takes his time to craft widescreen meditations on the role of a black man in a white world.

Start with: *Love & Hate* (POLYDOR, 2016)

LANKUM

Modern folk music's own *OK Computer*, MOJO called *False Lankum* earlier this year. Eyebrow-raising praise, perhaps, but it accurately nailed the doomy scope of the Dublin collective's fourth album. Former punks at the forefront of a wave of new Irish folk musicians (see also Lisa O'Neill, The Mary Wallopers), Lankum's way with a grisly old yarn has a gothic appeal far beyond the borders of roots music. As vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Daragh Lynch told us: "How mental, how dark and how bonkers can we go?"

Start with: *False Lankum* (ROUGH TRADE, 2023)

CATE LE BON

"It's as if she's been on earth through a few incarnations," John Cale told MOJO in 2019. "It makes it more compelling to see what's possible." A Welsh singer, guitarist, producer and sometime furniture maker, Cate Le Bon's gift is to be both a maverick outsider and an in-demand collaborator and innovator, able to find an idiosyncratic new path through melodic convention, for herself and for those whose records she's produced: Deerhunter, John Grant and, most recently, Wilco.

Start with: *Reward* (MEXICAN SUMMER, 2019)

BLAKE MILLS

Quite the triple threat, Blake Mills' CV as a subtly empathetic session guitarist already includes work with Joni Mitchell and Bob Dylan. His production credits, meanwhile, take in the aforementioned Alabama Shakes' *Sound & Color*. Could, though, Mills' most significant music be his own? A string of solo albums suggest a singer-songwriter able to keep a ➢

Long may they run: (clockwise from left) Young Fathers, Mdou Moctar, Weyes Blood, The Weather Station.

"YOUNG FATHERS' ELECTRONIC ROCK ENERGY HAS MADE THEM ONE OF THE BEST LIVE BANDS IN THE UK."

tight leash on virtuosity for his own music as well, allowing plenty of space to punctuate his Elliott Smith-toned studies.
Start with: *Mutable Set* (NEW DEAL, 2020)

MDOU MOCTAR

Those craving a more incendiary guitar hero – who flaunts his virtuosity rather than rations it – could do worse than look to troubled Niger and Mdou Moctar, a player who favours axe fireworks over the more mantric vibes of his Saharan contemporaries in Tinariwen and Songhoy Blues. In 2021, he told MOJO how it felt to hear Hendrix for the first time in 2014: "At first I thought it must've been a Tuareg playing… I didn't know America had musicians who were so talented."
Start with: *Afrique Victime* (MATADOR, 2021)

SAULT

It's a paradox that one of the best-connected projects here is also one of the most enigmatic. No photos exist of Sault, in spite of them releasing 11 lauded albums since 2019 and their apparent leader, Inflo, being the producer behind major records by Michael Kiwanuka and Little Simz. The mystery – 2021's *Nine* only appeared on streaming services for 99 days – imbues their spectral, politically-engaged R&B and disco with cultish heft. A further ongoing role for Sault: as an incubator for breakout solo talents, beginning with singer Cleo Sol.
Start with: *Untitled (Black Is)* (FOREVER LIVING ORIGINALS, 2020)

BILLY STRINGS

A debut album title of *Turmoil & Tinfoil* (2017) makes for a neat précis of Michigan picker William Apostol's fraught, drug-filled backstory. But it's his open-hearted charm and staggering musicianship that has made him a star: a bluegrass guitarist and songwriter capable of taking traditional music, over the course of epic live shows, into startling cosmic zones. His generation's Bill Monroe, but also perhaps their Jerry Garcia, too.
Start with: *Home* (ROUNDER, 2019)

MOSES SUMNEY

While musicians have always been wary of being constricted by genre, a common theme in this list is of artists who leave expectations and stereotypes in the dust. Take Sumney, a California native currently resident in the Blue Ridge Mountains after a teenage sojourn in Ghana. Sumney's two albums thus far have interrogated and transcended racial and sexual identities, resulting in a filigreed dream-soul that draws equally on Radiohead, The Temptations, Cocteau Twins and Nina Simone.
Start with: *Græ* (JAGJAGUWAR, 2020)

KURT VILE

Kurt Vile is a key player in an extended family of Philadelphia musicians that includes two other strong contenders for this list – The War On Drugs (Vile was co-founder, with Adam Granduciel) and Steve Gunn (briefly in Vile's band, The Violators). Vile's languid air and penchant for extended post-Neil Young solos often has him pegged as slacker rock, but a weighty back catalogue tells a different story: as a sweet, nuanced songwriter with a knack for sending classic rock tropes on productive – and often extremely catchy – new tangents.
Start with: *Bottle It In* (MATADOR, 2018)

KAMASI WASHINGTON

2018 magnum opus *Heaven And Earth* became the first jazz record to win MOJO's Album Of The Year poll but, in truth, 'jazz' is a limiting term for Washington's work as composer, arranger and lyrical saxophonist. The LA musician's records have a grandeur akin to David Axelrod – no orchestra and choir is too big for him. A key player, too, in an LA scene that also includes Thundercat and Flying Lotus, where the border between jazz and hip-hop is porous: Washington arranged strings on Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp A Butterfly*.
Start with: *Heaven And Earth* (XL, 2018)

THE WEATHER STATION

Tamara Lindeman's first records as The Weather Station were filed as part of a certain Canadian tradition: literate, introspective, folkish – which is to say, she seemed obvious kin to early Joni Mitchell. The finely-wrought lyrics remain, but Lindeman's musical purview had radically expanded by 2021's *Ignorance*, a masterpiece that gave her music new momentum and urgency, even as she grappled with the potentially paralysing horrors of climate anxiety. "I feel my task in life is to figure out how to be honest," she told MOJO.
Start with: *Ignorance* (FAT POSSUM, 2021)

WEYES BLOOD

Another Joni echo: when Lana Del Rey covered For Free in 2021, you could be forgiven for thinking the startlingly pure guest vocalist at the end of the story was Mitchell herself. It was, in fact, a younger denizen of the canyons – Natalie Mering, AKA Weyes Blood. From a freak-folk and avant-noise background, Mering's subsequent development has been prodigious, via a series of lush, MOR-adjacent albums that posit her as an uncanny Karen Carpenter, providing elegant but not deluded consolation in a time of global crisis.
Start with: *Titanic Rising* (SUB POP, 2019)

YOUNG FATHERS

Since winning the Mercury Music Prize in 2014 for their debut album, *Dead*, the Edinburgh trio have simultaneously developed their dense, funky electronic-rock in experimental and commercial directions. Exhibit A: fourth album *Heavy Heavy* (2023), which layers African chants, syncopated clapping, Massive Attack-style murk and much more over their most accessible songs yet. Also key: the frenetic energy which has made them one of the best live bands in the UK.
Start with: *Heavy Heavy* (NINJA TUNE, 2023)

Rob Walbers, Neil Krug, WH Moustapha, Brendan George Ko

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

"A supporting cast of crooks and lawyers, baboons and Panthers."

DANNY ECCLESTON GETS HIGHER WITH SLY STONE. BOOKS P108.

CONTENTS

82 ALBUMS
- A family affair: Wilco's *Cousin*
- Sufjan Stevens: his aim is true
- Jamila Woods gives heart and soul
- Roger Waters returns to the dark side
- Plus, Modern Nature, Animal Collective, The Mary Wallopers, Allison Russell, The Chemical Brothers, Steven Wilson, Joe Bonamassa, Juliana Hatfield, The Anchoress, Bob Marley, Adrian Sherwood and more.

96 REISSUES
- For Pete's sake: a new box set joins *Who's Next* with *Life House*
- Pharoah Sanders' 1977 masterpiece
- Tom Waits' Island years
- Plus, girl groups of the 1960s, Jon Hopkins, Slapp Happy, Ravi Shankar, Joe Strummer, Grateful Dead and more.

106 HOW TO BUY
- Digging MOJO's covermount CD crates.

108 BOOKS
- Brave and strong: Sly Stone's memoir
- Plus, Lol Tolhurst's take on goth, Thurston Moore, Ronnie Lane and more.

110 SCREEN
- A new Joan Baez documentary built from access to her personal archives.

INDEX

75 Dollar Bill 101
Aarset, Eivind & Bang, Jan 88
Ackamoor, Idris & The Pyramids 89
Allah-Las 93
Anchoress, The 90
Animal Collective 86
Armand Hammer 93
Auger, Brian 98
Black Dog, The 103
Blonde Redhead 93
Bonamassa, Joe 93
Broderick, Peter 88
Burning Spear 93
Chemical Brothers 84
CMAT 86
Creation Rebel 89
Danger Mouse & Jemini 103
Doors, The 103
Drew, Kevin 93
Dutcher, Jeremy 84
Everyone Asked About You 101
Fall, The 99
Goat 90
Grateful Dead 103
Hatfield, Juliana 92
Hauschka 92
Hey Colossus 90
High Tide 98
Hopkins, Jon 98
Irreversible Entanglements 90
Islet 91
Jeffery Lee Pierce Sessions Project, The 90
King, Clydie 99
Kyra 98
La Force 84
Last Peach, The 101
Lewis, James Brandon 87
Luluc 87
MacDermot, Galt 101
Madder Rose 92
Mammatus 89
Marley, Bob & The Wailers 87
Mary Wallopers, The 86
Maytones, The 101
Misch, Laura 91
Modern Nature 92
Nichols, Buffalo 91
Pachyman 89
Panda Bear & Sonic Boom 86
Pere Ubu 99
Redman, Joshua 91
Replacements, The 103
Rodgers, Paul 86
Russell, Allison 86
Sakamoto, Ryuichi 99
Sanders, Pharoah 100
Say She She 89
Schnitzler, Conrad 98
Setting 90
Setzer, Brian 88
Shankar, Anoushka 89
Shankar, Ravi 101
Simpson, Martin & Jutz, Thomm 91
Slapp Happy 98
Smith, Jorja 88
Squirrel Flower 91
Stevens, Sufjan 85
Strummer, Joe & The Mescaleros 103
Swansea Sound 86
Tirzah 90
VA: Disco Discharge 101
VA: Hearts For Sale! 99
VA: Music Of Nanci Griffith 84
VA: Produced By Tony Visconti 103
Vanishing Twin 92
Waters, Roger 87
Westlake, David 99
White China 87
Who, The 96
Wilco 82
Wilson, Steven 84
Wirtschaftswunder, The 98
Woods, Jamila 88
Wright, Richard 99
Youngs, Jenny Owen 93

The men from uncles

Jeff Tweedy's Chicago mob make some surprising new connections on their thirteenth album. By **John Mulvey**. Illustration by **Quinton Winter**.

Wilco

★★★★

Cousin

DBPM. CD/DL/LP

"*Cousin* is clever, involving, and a vital addition to one of the strongest discographies of the last 30 years."

THERE WERE not, by current standards, many album reviews in the first issue of MOJO. Our late colleague David Cavanagh tackled *Come On Feel The Lemonheads*, Teenage Fanclub's *Thirteen* and Nirvana's *In Utero*, and called the latter's Scentless Apprentice, with unusual hyperbole, "arguably the most exciting shot of rock music of all time". Fourteen of the 24 reviews were reissues. "There are few advantages to being 54," wrote a guesting John Peel in a personal homage to rock'n'roll. "Perhaps the only one is that you are old enough to have had your life transformed by Elvis Presley."

Uncle Tupelo's *Anodyne*, released the same day in October 1993 as the Teenage Fanclub album, didn't make the cut. Elsewhere, reviews of the record often focused on an inherent contradiction. *Anodyne* was at once a thrilling assertion of a newish genre, alt-country, but at the same time deferential to a canon of the Stones, Neil Young, Gram Parsons. One of the band's two singer-songwriters, Jeff Tweedy, seemed to occasionally grapple with the weight of musical history, via a wry preoccupation with publishing credits. "Name me a song that everybody knows," he sang, "And I'll bet you it belongs to Acuff-Rose."

A few months later, Uncle Tupelo had split, and Tweedy had embarked on a new project – a band called Wilco that would consume much of his energies for the next 30 years. Over that time, Tweedy's work has constantly evolved, but the instinct to embrace useful dichotomies – to make music that simultaneously fits into a historic continuum, but stretches and subverts 'classic' rock – has remained strong; a value pertinent to MOJO's tastes too, even if we didn't review Uncle Tupelo the first time round.

BACK STORY: BEAR FAMILY?

● If you've watched the exceptional Hulu/Disney+ restaurant drama The Bear, you'll have heard plenty of Wilco: four songs have figured on the soundtrack, including all of Spiders (Kidsmoke) in Series One's single-take masterpiece, Review. "Wilco is one of my favourite bands," Bear creator Christopher Storer told Uproxx. Given the show's setting in Chicago, and Richie, one of the main characters, being nicknamed "Cousin", the connection to Wilco's new album seems logical? "Absolutely not," claims Jeff Tweedy. "I don't really know what it is."

The last Wilco album, 2022's *Cruel Country*, defied expectations by leaning into a genre Tweedy spent most of those three decades trying to extricate himself from. Mentioning 'Country' in the title felt like he was playing with rather than pandering to the small subset of fans who still preferred Uncle Tupelo; as ever with Wilco, the music was often more silvery and elusive than easily classifiable. Still, one thing *Cruel Country* shared with *Anodyne* was how it felt very much like a band live in a room, relatively unadorned.

Cruel Country was, as Tweedy articulates over the page, a post-lockdown album, predicated on the simple pleasures of playing together. *Cousin*, its swift follow-up, is a different kind of record – "Art-pop", reckons Tweedy. The thirteenth Wilco album is a meticulously layered studio confection, rich with experimental devils in the detail, that aligns closer to a Wilco lineage of 2019's *Ode To Joy*, 2004's *A Ghost Is Born* and, strikingly, 2002's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. And for the first time since *Sky Blue Sky* in 2007, an outside producer has been brought into the band's Chicago Loft – Cate Le Bon, a Welsh solo artist and producer whose gift for rethinking orthodoxies has recently been employed by Devendra Banhart, John Grant and Kurt Vile.

Wilco have long been skilled at avoiding musical complacency themselves: besides Tweedy, embedded avant-gardists like drummer Glenn Kotche and the remarkable guitarist Nels Cline have seen to that. Nevertheless, Le Bon's impact on *Cousin* is akin to Jim O'Rourke's on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* – as a trusted interloper who can unlock new dimensions for this most reliable but restless of contemporary American bands.

The weather systems of static, feedback and orchestrated guitar noise that underpin Infinite Surprise and Ten Dead aren't far removed from those running through Poor Places on *YHF*, if not quite so overtly tempestuous. But Le Bon brings new toys, too. The gorgeous Sunlight Ends is built on a sputtering drum machine, and the guitars and keyboards initially sound hesitant, rudimentary, brittle, only gradually consolidating into a more familiar Wilco wash as Cline's lap steel emerges in the last minute. Cousin itself is choppy and adjacent to new wave, though perhaps not entirely attributable to Le Bon's input; seasoned Wilco listeners may be reminded of 2015's You Satellite.

Also true to form, Tweedy's songs initially sound fragile but soon enough prove to be robust and resilient, whatever the setting. Soldier Child is more or less straightforward enough to have fitted on *Cruel Country*, while lead single Evicted resurfaces a love of George Harrison (2009's glossier You Never Know might be an antecedent). "It's too late to be unclear," Tweedy promises on Evicted, but clarity is not always easy to achieve.

The most rewarding clash on *Cousin*, it transpires, is between Le Bon's arch critical distance and Tweedy's open-heartedness. It's another one of those dichotomies Wilco are hardwired to exploit, which becomes integral to the album. They challenge themselves to sustain emotional engagement, even when the surrounding climate and aesthetic is forbidding.

If there's a theme to *Cousin*, it centres around the difficulties and rewards of making those connections in alienated environments. The title track's staccato pulse comes studded with conversational fragments at odds with one another, "When your red lines/Get crossed with mine". Communication breakdowns proliferate, before finding resolution on the closing Meant To Be. "If my words say what you meant to say/Doesn't that say we were meant to feel this way?" Tweedy sings, allowing himself the sort of sentimentality he and Le Bon have so rigorously policed for the previous 39 minutes. "There's this thread of authenticity that flows through everything [Wilco] do, whatever the genre, whatever the feel of the record," says Le Bon.

Contexts shift. Musicians and fans who were in their mid-twenties at the time of Wilco and MOJO's birth now find themselves in their mid-fifties and confronting a similar predicament to that of John Peel in MOJO 1. But, reassuringly, the very best artists find new ways to welcome change and stay true to themselves – to get their message across. That, perhaps, is the ultimate triumph of this clever, involving, vital addition to one of the strongest discographies of the last 30 years: Wilco endure.

JEFF SPEAKS! TWEEDY ON ART-POP, CATE LE BON AND BEING "A BIG SOFTIE".

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NELS
GLENN
MICHAEL
JEFF
PAT
CATE
JOHN

Family affair: Wilco's Jeff Tweedy – "I think *Cousin* sounds unlike any other LP we've made."

"Wilco's an unpopular pop band."

Jeff Tweedy speaks to John Mulvey.

***Cousin* feels like a very contained project, but the sleevenotes say it was recorded between January 2019 and May 2023?**

"Some of this material was a record we started before the pandemic and chipped away at a little bit during the pandemic. But when we were finally able to record in the same room together, it wasn't the immediate, satisfying project to work on that we were all craving. It felt like the right moment to record *Cruel Country* then, because those songs were so immediate.

"But the intention was always to keep working on this record. *Cousin* was more labour-intensive and conceptual – you can't make pop songs like this without a lot of trial and error, a lot of exploration. You have to take them apart and put them back together. That's really the fun of it, but it's not always the most fun for a whole band."

On your Starship Casual Substack, you described *Cousin* as art-pop.

"I don't really know what else to call it. I think it's pop music. I've always loved pop music. I always thought *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* was a pop record until they told us it wasn't, and I still thought it was even after they told us it wasn't. The same with *Summerteeth* and a lot of stuff that we've done. I mean, Wilco's an unpopular pop band."

Maybe these labels are conceptual simplifications for something more complicated? *Cruel Country* wasn't as straightforward as a country record, and *Cousin* is nowhere near as simplistic as an art-pop record.

"I think of it the other way around. The notions people build up around genres are simplistic, but the genres themselves can contain multitudes. There's a lot of music I consider country music that doesn't sound at all like each other. Genres get really simplistic when they try and sound like themselves, and that's music I rarely respond to."

Do you hear a tension between some of the art-pop textures on *Cousin* and the humane warmth of your songs?

"Not explicitly. I think the record sounds unlike any other record we've made, but the tension is very familiar to me, because that's the tension of *Summerteeth*. That's the tension of a lot of things I love, that I've discovered how to make over time, repeatedly. I think it makes sense, because that's the way I feel. I really want to be open and direct and warm, and I crave connections with records. But I think it's a lie to not acknowledge the artificiality of a lot of the way we communicate.

"I have a tendency sometimes to recoil from my recoiling, and just let it all hang out and be a big softie. There's nothing wrong with that, but I did think this body of songs would be undermined by that impulse. And I felt Cate was a really like-minded soul to work with, because it made it easier for me to have someone else keeping an eye out for the maudlin tendency."

Steven Wilson

★★★★

The Harmony Codex

VIRGIN. CD/DL/LP

Seventh solo album from Porcupine Tree singer further stakes out his own terrain.

With his day band indefinitely parked after last year's *Closure/Continuation*, Steven Wilson turns in this 65-minute epic high on art-rock ambition. While a few tracks nudge prog length (see the King Crimson-like polyrhythms of Impossible Tightrope), Wilson is more heir to '80s studio conceptualists such as Peter Gabriel, Rupert Hine and Thomas Dolby. Inclination imagines a world where Talk Talk were remixed by Aphex Twin, Actual Brutal Facts sees his voice subtly pitched down into Matt Johnson/The The territory, and disparate collaborators range from Interpol drummer Sam Fogarino to Floyd bassist Guy Pratt. Best of all, the title track offers 10 minutes of shapeshifting electronic ambience. Wilson being an in-demand spatial audio mixer, it all sounds great in surround, but in stereo it remains a highly entertaining sonic journey where you never quite know what's around the corner.

Tom Doyle

La Force

★★★

XO Skeleton

SECRET CITY. CD/DL/LP

Canadian singer-songwriter uses love, death and memory as frame for second album.

A telephone call from a life insurance broker might not seem like the most poetic trigger for a song, but Ariel Engle's velvety second album as La Force quickly makes it clear that she can find drama and irony anywhere. An associate of Broken Social Scene, The National's Aaron Dessner and, in All Hands_Make Light, Godspeed You! Black Emperor's Efrim Menuck, Engle sets the emotional controls for the heart of the moon, stirring up gothy atmospheres on the slow-dance Cocteau Twins of Condition Of Us or spinning through A Forest on the death-facing title track. The Bat For Lashes smoke-and-mirrors of Outrun The Sun and How Do You Love A Man's minimal Lana Del Rey moves are supple, gestural pop, saxophone and synth supporting Engle's taste for theatre. All the ethereal turmoil, though, can't mask *XO Skeleton*'s good songwriting bones.

Victoria Segal

The Chemical Brothers

★★★★

For That Beautiful Feeling

VIRGIN EMI. CD/DL/LP

Late-period belter from the elite-class mind-benders of UK dance.

The world's foremost psychedelicists these past 30 years have been hiding in plain sight: the staunch Chems duo of tech wizard Tom Rowlands and vibesman Ed Simons have been reliable album chart-toppers, too. Where 2019's *No Geography* certainly had its moments (eg, Got To Keep On's chiming '70s disco beef-up), this tenth long-player consistently packs both the thrilling immediacy and sonic complexity which helped high-watermarks like 1999's *Surrender* cross over from the dancefloor. Right off the bat, Live Again rivals My Bloody Valentine's Soon for mind-and-body transcendence; its ecstatic marriage of droning guitars, delirious rhythms and Halo Maud's spaced-out sighs prove irresistible. Further treats await: No Reason's whooping breakbeat-acid nirvana, the overdriven LFO bleep of Goodbye, muscular Everyday People-sampling block-rock (The Weight) and Skipping Like A Stone's mesmerising synth-pop might be repeat collaborator Beck's finest hour. Overall, one mighty, magnificent trip.

Andrew Perry

Various

★★★★

More Than A Whisper: Celebrating The Music Of Nanci Griffith

ROUNDER. CD/DL/LP

Friends and fans pay tribute to late, sainted Americana original.

Tribute albums often sink or swim on the quality of their contributors, and by any reckoning *More Than A Whisper* is Olympic standard. Opening with the tearjerking intimacy of Sarah Jarosz's You Can't Go Home Again, it includes contributions from prime influences John Prine and Emmylou Harris, to contemporaries Lyle Lovett, Steve Earle and Mary Gauthier, plus a slew of latter-day fans: Billy Strings, Molly Tuttle and Aaron Lee Tasjan among them. If there's a misstep it's The War And Treaty's bafflingly overwrought version of From A Distance, but best of all is Todd Snider turning Ford Econoline into a timewarp slice of pure Bakersfield Sound. Put together over several years, the love and care that has gone into curating and recording these tracks still doesn't scratch what a loss Griffith's death in 2021 meant to the 'folkabilly' world she pioneered.

Andy Fyfe

Jeremy Dutcher

★★★★

Motewolonuwok

SECRET CITY. CD/DL/LP

Second album from Canada's "Two-Spirit song carrier".

Given the measured lucidity of Jeremy Dutcher's voice and the restraint of his piano – not to mention the fact that he begins by singing in his endangered language of Wolastoqey – it might not immediately be apparent that there is revolution in this album. Read the translations, however, or the words of Dutcher's first English songs, and this follow-up to 2018's *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa* is about people rising up in the streets, about unity and community, about identity; "Always and forever/This is Indian land," states Skicinuwihkuk. Dutcher, who is a member of Neqotkuk (Tobique First Nation), shares an operatic timbre with Anohni, his Owen Pallett-arranged songs transmitting a similar sense of spiritual commitment – unsurprising considering his themes of loss, witness-bearing and legacy. There is real weight behind these songs, and *Motewolonuwok* ("the people of great spiritual power") carries it with sombre grace.

Victoria Segal

The Chemical Brothers: still feeling groovy.

Peter Crosby, Hamish Brown

Throwing muse: Sufjan Stevens gets deeply personal on *Javelin*.

Spear of destiny

Returning to his singer-songwriter roots, Stevens offers glimpses into the loves and losses that have shaped him. By James McNair.

Sufjan Stevens

★★★★

Javelin

ASTHMATIC KITTY. CD/DL/LP

SONGS ABOUT serial killers and figure skaters (John Wayne Gacy Jr; Tonya Harding). An orchestral suite and wordless film hymning a road bridge in Brooklyn (2009's *The BQE*). A mostly electronic LP inspired by outsider artist Royal Robertson (2010's *The Age Of Adz*), and a lengthy ambient meditation dedicated to his late father, Rasjid (2021's *Convocations*). Add Sufjan Stevens' music for film and ballet to these random CV pin-drops, and it's clear his purview has grown prairie-wide. Stevens shape-shifts to rest or build certain muscles, it seems, yet this driven, inscrutable creative still shines brightest when primarily armed with acoustic guitar and voice.

If you concur with that take, this record is wonderful news. Discounting *A Beginner's Mind*, our host's 2021 co-write with Angelo De Augustine, *Javelin* is Stevens' first 'proper' singer-songwriter LP since 2015's emotive family memoir *Carrie & Lowell*. Though not without distressed beats and other tech-tics (is that subtle vocal Auto-Tune we hear on piano-led opener Goodbye Evergreen?), *Javelin* also chimes with Stevens' 2005 masterpiece *Illinois*, though its folk-imbued chamber pop motifs are dispensed more thriftily.

Save for Bryce Dessner of The National's additional guitars on Shit Talk, an eight-minute, communication breakdown-themed outlier with banjo and sleigh bells, Stevens plays every instrument on *Javelin*, but he does have a select team of vocal foils. Adrienne Maree Brown, Hannah Cohen, Pauline Delassus, Megan Lui and Nedelle Torrisi all contribute bv's, and when the exquisite harmonies on Everything That Rises swell to choral proportions it's magical.

Stevens' ever-evocative guitar arpeggios cascade (Genuflecting Ghost) or skip (A Running Start), and his pukka, tip-toeing vocal melodies are very much unchained. Still adept at spectacular, if somewhat opaque intimacy, he enchants on My Red Little Fox (sic), with its baroque recorders, the titular lover's pet name grown mournful on the tongue, and on So You Are Tired, a devastating, washed-out rag of a song wherein all possible routes to concord have been fruitlessly trod. A more curious inclusion here is Stevens' bright take on Neil Young's There's A World, which, with reversing the typical direction of flow re cover versions, prettifies and straightens out Young's gnarlier, more filmic original. You wonder if the song has some deep personal significance for Stevens.

Weighed alongside the 10, self-penned short essays which accompany *Javelin* – variously philosophical, poetic and fantastical, they allude to various Stevens loves both platonic and romantic – this is clearly a deeply personal record. Still, anyone hoping to put flesh on the bones of the Stevens enigma is likely to be disappointed. "Will anybody ever love me/For good reasons/Without grievance/Not for sport", he sings here, seemingly still searching. For his music, certainly.

FILTER ALBUMS

Allison Russell: she's back with a unique groove.

Allison Russell

★★★★

The Returner

FANTASY. CD/DL/LP

Montreal-born singer-songwriter reinvents Americana. Again.

WHEN AN album includes a song title as provocative as Eve Was Black, it's obvious we're not in Americana-land any more. Allison Russell has been warping and challenging whatever 'Americana' means for over two decades, first as a member of Po' Girls, then Birds Of Chicago with husband JT Nero, and later Our Native Daughters (with Rhiannon Giddens), but it's her solo albums that reveal her true scope. Following on from 2021's *Outside Child*, *The Returner* is built on a roots foundation, but disco strings, funk bass, jazzy clarinet and tribal drums variously create a unique groove. From the playful opener Springtime and through Demons' message of experience to directly confront your, er, demons, ("Turn around, look them in the face/They don't like how sunlight tastes"), by the time the closing spiritual Requiem rolls around it's self-evident Russell is very much in a genre of one.

Andy Fyfe

Panda Bear & Sonic Boom

★★★★

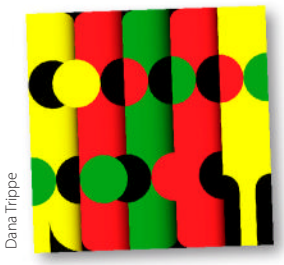
Reset In Dub

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

UK dub don Adrian Sherwood's radical reset of *Reset*.

For over four decades, On-U Sound's Adrian Sherwood has been the go-to remixer for rock outliers including Primal Scream, Nine Inch Nails, Depeche Mode and, most recently, Spoon. And so it goes for like-minded sonic explorers Panda Bear (Animal Collective's Noah Lennox) and Sonic Boom (Peter Kember of Spacemen 3), who invited the producer to deconstruct/rebuild last year's excellent *Reset* LP. It's a twinkly, shimmering mix, Sherwood retaining *Reset*'s retro-futurist Beach Boys/Everlys psych-pop vibe but filtering it through a luminescent dub prism. On-U stalwart Doug Wimbish's deep, lolloping bass line rumbles through Gettin' To The Point Dub's syncopated rhythm-scape; Everyday Dub is punctuated by blasts of majestic brass and soundsystem sirens; weeping cello sucks the listener into Whirlpool Dub's swirling vortex while Danger Dub is transformed into a lysergic rocksteady skank. More than just a remix project, then, *Reset In Dub* is a thrilling head-trip in its own right.

Simon McEwen



Dana Trippe

Animal Collective

★★★

Isn't It Now?

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Far-flung Maryland psychedelic travellers get real on their twelfth album.

After woodshedding in rustic Leiper's Fork, Tennessee in summer 2019, the AC quartet had 20-odd songs mapped; through that difficult 2020, the nine that were achievable via online assembly comprised last year's *Time Skiffs*, while these nine were recorded in-the-room at Brooklyn's Bunker facility in late 2021. The joy of four amigos convening from their disparate abodes in North California, Lisbon et al is detectable in Noah 'Panda Bear' Lennox's live drumming, and equally 'present' piano from Josh Dibb, AKA Deakin, all under the warm co-production of Russell Elevado, analogue-only overseer of hip-hop/jazz giants like D'Angelo and Kamasi Washington. If each record has its distinct feel, they share a blissful loveliness, enticing for trad-psych heads put off by the future-forward mania of 2009's *Merriweather Post Pavilion*. To Bolero-riffed beat-pop, Soul Capturer beautifully exorcises today's digi-overload, while 22-minute Defeat finds hope in an entrancing oceanic ebb-and-flow, with all the child-like discovery of late-'90s Mercury Rev.

Andrew Perry

The Mary Wallopers

★★★★

Irish Rock'n'Roll

BC. CD/DL/LP

Rough trad: second album from Dundalk's raucous folk disruptors.

All spite, glee and hectic invective, The Mary Wallopers have made a name for themselves as the punk spirit of Irish traditional music, picking up The Pogues' disreputable mantle since the release of last year's self-titled debut. Yet as the septet's version of The Butcher Boy indicated, there was another side to The Mary Wallopers, one developed here with a haunting take on Pecker Dunne's Wexford. Whether in meditative mode or at full pelt, they speak as they find, and what they find often disgusts them. While the foul-mouthed hilarity of The Rich Man And The Poor Man is consummate call-and-response rabble-rousing, its flipside is the Gates Of Heaven, scything through hypocrisy with a cold, hard fury ("thou shalt not hide babies inside a septic tank"). Like the verminous boarding-house room that features in rueful drinking song Rothsea O, *Irish Rock'n'Roll* is impossible to shake off.

Victoria Segal

Paul Rodgers

★★★

Midnight Rose

SUN. CD/DL/LP

The former Free & Bad Company man's first solo originals in 24 years.

Like that of Rod Stewart, Paul Rodgers' 21st century output has often leaned towards the interpretative. His 2014 Stax covers set *The Royal Sessions* showed enduring vocal prowess, but what had become of the co-write chops that helped birth such home-grown classics as All Right Now? A deeply personal look back at his storied journey thus far, the rootsy *Midnight Rose* finds Rodgers' muse awakened, Rolling Stones pianist Chuck Leavell among those helping him flesh out songs he began writing during lockdown. Rodgers wears his now mellower, less macho persona well on Coming Home and Photo Shooter, but the writing input of an Andy Fraser or a Mick Ralphs, say, is sometimes missed. Closing track Melting, though, is special, Rodgers bringing pedigree and uncontainable power to a bluegrass-tinged blues exorcising "the hounds of hell on my trail."

James McNair

Swansea Sound

★★★

Twentieth Century

SKEP WAX. CD/DL/LP

C86 and the City: Heavenly and the Pooh Sticks take on global capitalism.

"I just need to talk to anyone who fears we're heading for dystopia," sings Heavenly/Tallulah Gosh alumnus Amelia Fletcher on Keep Your Head On, the most righteous banger on her second collaborative LP with Pooh Sticks kingpin Hue Williams. Primary-coloured Buzzcocks-pop suffused with existential dread, *Twentieth Century* finds Fletcher and Williams presenting a Crass-angry take on the exploitation of third-world miners (Paradise), the ubiquity of algorithms (Greatest Hits Radio) and all-consuming click'n'collect capitalism (Click It And Pay), mindful of how little can be done to effect change. Times are desperate, then, but Swansea Sound take comfort in personal victories; local gigs (Seven In The Car) or a bargain at the record shop (Markin' It Down). "We have to dream and we still have lives to lead," Williams sings on Pack The Van, living well seemingly the only tangible form of revenge on offer.

Jim Wirth

CMAT

★★★★

CrazyMad, For Me

AWAL. CD/DL/LP

You don't have to be a writer of smart, funny pop songs to work here but…

There is a concept behind *CrazyMad, For Me*, the second album by Irish singer-songwriter Ciara Mary-Alice Thompson. It involves imagining herself as a 47-year-old woman who has followed YouTube instructions to build a time machine, hoping to protect her younger self from a catastrophic relationship. Even without this knowledge, though, it's clear the follow-up to Thompson's 2022 debut *If My Wife New I'd Be Dead* is one hell of a break-up record, customising glam country and outlaw pop with Lana Del Rey decals and go-faster lyrics (Sex And The City and Spirited Away both get a mention). John Grant joins on the space-Roy Orbison of Where Are Your Kids Tonight?; the heartbreaking Rent sounds like 50ft Angel Olsen; even the Lynsey De Paul echoes of Have Fun! feel like a great idea. Hyper-melancholic, ultra-vivid, *CrazyMad, For Me* showcases Thompson's off-beam pop skills, a distinctive voice in every way.

Victoria Segal

Return to Oz

A 50th anniversary reinvention that's as necessary as it is timely – says Waters. By James McNair.

His *Dark* materials: Roger Waters' *Redux* is an unnerving, stirring adjunct.

Roger Waters

★★★★

The Dark Side Of The Moon Redux

SGB MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

WHY RE-PAINT your masterpiece? Why violate the sacrosanct, inviting comparisons between original and remake? Roger Waters' reasoning has at least two strands. Firstly, *Dark Side* addresses madness, so why not embrace folly? Secondly, he argues that the LP's ever-pertinent messages have gone unheeded, and thus warrant repeating. The aim, *Dark Side*'s conceptual architect has said, is not to "supersede or replace" the original version he loves, but rather "to remember it and provide an adjunct." Fifty years on, after cover versions of the entire album by The Flaming Lips and other devotees, Waters has more right than most to meddle. But what a bomb to lob at the Floyd estate HQ.

Dark Side Redux, then, but also heavily redacted. All conspicuous virtuosity is gone, hence no nod to Dick Parry's sax on Us & Them and Money, nothing remotely Gilmour-esque, and nothing akin to Clare Torry's celebrated gospel extemporising on The Great Gig In The Sky. Instead, *Redux* is all about the words; about feel and an almost post-apocalyptic sounding minimalism. Here, Waters brings gallows humour and a cranky octogenarian's authority/gravitas to those *Dark Side* themes he first flagged at a precocious 29: insanity, avarice, the horrors of war, mortality and the exponential acceleration of time's arrow. The older you are, the deeper you feel it.

Like prog's answer to Lee Marvin, Waters makes a virtue of his voice's craggy fissures. Fully exposed to the H-bomb dawn, his low register growl proves the perfect peg on which to hang perhaps the hardest-punching lyrics of the English art-school movement, and the original *Dark Side*'s musings are here augmented by near-soliloquies old and new. "For life is a short, warm moment/And death is a long, cold rest", Waters rasps at the start of Speak To Me, quoting from Floyd's own Free Four, from 1972's *Obscured By Clouds*. It isn't Shakespeare, but is enunciated like it could be.

There's also something of Bergman's The Seventh Seal about this remake, Waters playing chess with the reaper as he vocalises a Patmosian anxiety dream/nightmare over the originally instrumental sections of On The Run and Time. But the most successful reinvention here is Money, now a spooked Delta blues decoupled from its original *musique concrète* tape-loop and refracted through Tom Waits's junkyard filter. If Breathe's chords are only adumbrated, if Us & Them's pretty, originally Gilmour-sung melody is partly grounded, it scarcely matters, because the new focus on these songs' lyrics proves deeply powerful, a different and profound kind of high. Consequently, *The Dark Side Of The Moon Redux* is wholly valid, the unnerving, stirring adjunct Waters was aiming for.

Kate Izor

James Brandon Lewis

★★★★

For Mahalia, With Love

TAO FORMS. CD/DL/LP

Young jazz maverick bathes nine Mahalia devotionals in fierce fire music.

By investing church music with African-American folk traditions, Mahalia Jackson transcended the divisions between the secular and the holy, coining the voice of gospel. Saxophonist James Brandon Lewis's tribute to her achievement is fierce and sincere, reinterpreting nine spirituals she made famous via his own brand of fire music. There are echoes throughout of jazz's own spiritual greats across these tracks – the untethered devotion of Coltrane, the speaking-in-tongues intensity of Albert Ayler – but Lewis's own voice is clear and defiant. As with his bewitching cover of Someday We'll All Be Free from his other album of this year, *Eye Of I*, his bristling, unexpected arrangements draw new complexities from songs as familiar as Wade In The Water and Swing Low. His wild call-and-response face-offs with cornet-player Kirk Knuffke, meanwhile, are electrifying and inspired.

Stevie Chick

Bob Marley & The Wailers

★★★

Africa Unite

ISLAND. CD/DL/LP

Two musical worlds collide, with variable results.

After sweeping the African continent, Afrobeats influenced Jamaican music production, leading dancehall mainstays like Sean Paul and Damian Marley to dabble in the form. *Africa Unite* returns the favour by placing contemporary African stars atop Bob Marley's best-known works, but the re-castings reveal vast gaps between Afrobeats and vintage reggae. The less obvious choices yield the sweetest fruit, with Nutty O & Winky D offering a post-pandemic take of So Much Trouble and Nigerian singer Rema duetting with Marley's grandson Skip for a spirited revamp of Dem Belly Full; Ami Faku successfully updates Redemption Song with expressive lines delivered in Xhosa, and Stonebwoy's Buffalo Soldier is decent. Elsewhere, Marley is a ghostly presence, the overdubs on Stir It Up and One Love jarring and obtrusive. The Afrobeats generation might love this, but elder roots fans will inevitably be less enamoured.

David Katz

Luluc

★★★★

Diamonds

COMMUNITY MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Australian duo's deep-freeze take on Americana.

The trim 32 minutes of the fifth album from the Australian country-inclined duo of Steve Hassett and Zoë Randell are shot-through with a frosty otherness. It doesn't matter that the opening title track is a form of road song namechecking Texan legend Doug Sahm and a show played with J Mascis in Ann Arbor. Or whether The Shore is an *On The Beach*-esque epic. Arrangements incorporating brass, New Orleans-style marching percussion, organ or strings do not subtract from this distinctive flavour. Randell's voice is so crystalline, so deadpan it's spooky: bringing an incorporeality to a cover of As Tears Go By. Luluc's last album, *Dreamboat*, had a couple of tracks produced by The National's Aaron Dessner which imbued a temperateness. Now, this is excised. See this as Townes Van Zandt were he refracted through the lens of Mazzy Star.

Kieron Tyler

White China

★★★★

Hang Up The Lights

TEMPLE. DL

New York's in-demand producer-songwriter's DIY third album.

Gianluca Buccellati's creative input to Lana Del Rey's *Lust For Life*, and especially Arlo Parks' Mercury Prize-winner *Collapsed In Sunbeams*, saw the teen prodigy overwhelmed with subsequent commissions, before a car crash convinced him to slow down, and put himself first. *Hang Up The Lights* is total vindication of that decision; wholly self-made, it takes the form of an immersive trip where sensual melodies and heightened choruses come bathed in a nocturnal glow. Radiohead's influence – from Thom Yorke's vocal to haunted piano ballads and skittery electronica – is clear, but the concise rendering (only two tracks breach four minutes) and agile diversity more resembles Beck across a blissful title track, the gloomy Pressure and trippy Purple Candy Glow. Buccellati's lyrics reveal a more insecure side, especially around relationships, with added spice from flashes of bravado. You'd tip him for great things, if he weren't already Grammy and Ivor Novello-nominated besides the Mercury.

Martin Aston

In at the deep end: Jamila Woods bares all on *Water Made Us*.

Songs in the key of love

The Chicago soul polymath's deeply touching third album. By Stevie Chick.

Jamila Woods

★★★★

Water Made Us

JAGJAGUWAR. CD/DL/LP

JAMILA WOODS likes to sink her teeth into a concept. Her 2016 debut album *HEAVN* explored the reality of what it means to be a black woman in Chicago, celebrating her "black girl magic" while noting "we go missing by the hundreds/Ain't nobody checking for us". Her second album, 2019's *Legacy! Legacy!*, paid tribute to her creative and cultural heroes but was also part self-portrait, Woods finding her own fierceness in her depiction of Miles Davis yelling "Shut up motherfucker I don't take requests", her own restlessness reflected in her chronicle of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera's knotty relationship.

The concept behind the Chicago-born poet, community organiser, educator and singer/songwriter's third album is, simply, love. Only, because this is Woods, it's actually not so simple after all. She interrogates her subject with the same tireless focus, the same sensitivity as her earlier albums approached theirs; savouring every complexity and contradiction, she finds that four-letter-word contains multitudes.

Water Made Us – its title taken from a speech given by author Toni Morrison – is sequenced to follow the arc of a relationship, from meet-cute to final denouement. But each chapter of this story is so fleshed out, so multifaceted, these tracks transcend the triteness of too many pop songs walking similar ground. She finds jewels of wisdom in every step of the journey; Tiny Garden examines the nervy beginnings of a relationship, the wary Woods promising her lover her surface might be "Iceberg hard/But look below".

Perhaps unsurprisingly, though, *Water Made Us* moves deepest when applying Woods's sensitive, poetic eye to heartbreak, and resisting simple resolutions. Wolfsheep, her account of loving an untrue man ("I fear you are not a good person/But I loved you anyway"), finds her resisting judgement in the same breath as acknowledging her pain ("Everybody's good/No one is"). Send A Dove, a brooding exhale over a doomed relationship ("Don't raise your voice at me/I'll flinch like it's a fist"), is all tender bruises and scars, Woods still somehow finding empathy for her broken ex. The pain feels real, the details truthful.

Set to a kaleidoscopic soundtrack of melting Jam & Lewis slow-burners, upbeat Prince-esque synth soul, Auto-Tune-inflected modernist R&B and even rapturous gospel, it's an album of true deep soul. Woods's most accessible set to date is also her most ambitious, for its Byzantine approach to its concept, but also for her honesty and openness. Like the video for recent non-album single Sula, *Water Made Us* finds Woods naked and unashamed, bravely cataloguing every impression love has left on her heart and sharing the wisdom she's earned along the way.

Brian Setzer

★★★

The Devil Always Collects

SURFDOG. CD/DL/LP

First Setzer solo outing since 2021's *Gotta Have The Rumble*.

In November 1980, just before their debut single Runaway Boys hit the UK charts, I watched the Stray Cats soundchecking for a gig in Norwich. Between songs, the 22-year-old Brian Setzer ran effortlessly through some of Cliff Gallup's classic guitar breaks from Gene Vincent's 1950s recordings, note perfect. Forty-three years later, that mastery of rockabilly picking is displayed front and centre against a bass and drums backing throughout the mainly up-tempo self-penned material on this new LP. That said, the highlight here is probably the fine cranked-up cover of Del Reeves' 1965 truck-driving anthem Girl On The Billboard. Lyrically, he's still firmly in Stray Cat territory: black leather jackets, high-performance engines, the lure of nightclub romances and the open road. One song's called A Dude'll Do (What A Dude'll Do), and he shows little sign of messing with the formula at this stage.

Max Décharné

Eivind Aarset & Jan Bang

★★★★

Last Two Inches Of Sky

PUNKT. CD/DL/LP

Sonic landscape painters enlist Nona Hendryx for a cameo.

Guitarist Eivind Aarset and remixer Jan Bang have been exploring the ambient borderlands between raw sound and music since the early 1990s. These eight tracks further refine the brew: electronica fizzes and crackles over stuttering beats; shimmering slabs of sound drift over dub bass. This is a genre with quite a past now, and Seraphine could be a backing track from Byrne/Eno's pioneering *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. A few echoes too of Can Krautrock, but the wistful swoops of Aarset's guitar remain unique on what is a swirling sound-bath for the ears. The Norwegian pair use vocalists twice: never mind that the Bowie-esque title track, sung by Tim Elsenburg of Sweet Billy Pilgrim, isn't quite the climax you'd hoped for; Nona Hendryx (she of Labelle legend) is imperious on Legion.

John Bungey

Jorja Smith

★★

Falling Or Flying

FAMM. CD/DL/LP

Walsall singer/songwriter's second album falls short.

A commercially successful debut album can sometimes inhibit artistic growth, as has happened with Jorja Smith, whose follow-up to 2018's chart-topping *Lost & Found* finds the 26-year-old singer adopting a safety-first policy rather than taking creative chances. She possesses an alluring voice, but on many tracks, beginning with the opener Try Me, it sounds robotic and even monotonous, seemingly generated by an unholy marriage of Auto-Tune and AI algorithms. For the most part, carefree innovation is abandoned for an "if it worked before, it'll work again" philosophy. Consequently, Smith often finds herself stuck in a musical straitjacket of tired R&B tropes, rarely able to break out of a narrow comfort zone. But on the odd occasion she takes a risk, as with the jazzy house groove Little Things, the effect is sensational. If Smith truly wants to soar, first she'll have to conquer her fear of falling.

Charles Waring

Peter Broderick & Ensemble 0

★★★★

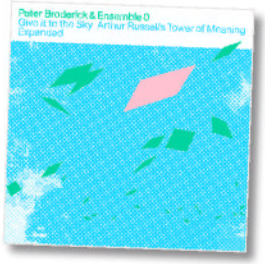
Give It To The Sky: Arthur Russell's Tower Of Meaning Expanded

ERASED TAPES. CD/DL/LP

French ensemble and Oregonian singer-songwriter 'reanimate' Russell's 1983 chamber opus.

Composed for a 1981 staging of Euripides' tragedy Medea (but nixed when Russell and director Robert Wilson quarrelled), *Tower Of Meaning* is a suite of brass and woodwind-dominated orchestrations whose stark modernism is constantly leavened by timeless, doleful melodies. Here, Ensemble 0 saxophonist Julien Pontvianne has painstakingly re-scored the piece, taking the unfinished quality of Russell's original Chatham Square LP as licence to elaborate and burnish the arrangements, creating a delightfully warm, immersive listening experience and introducing a previously absent lower register, notably on the gorgeously glowering V. Broderick, latterly the go-to interpreter for the composer's estate, adds renderings of typically mercurial, unreleased Russell songs, further treasure from a seemingly bottomless demo pile: the upbeat White Jet Smoke, introspective cowboy paean Corky and wistfully balladic title track given soulful, brass-garlanded readings that feel more like empathetic homages than functional impersonations.

David Sheppard



Creation Rebel

★★★★

Hostile Environment

ON-U SOUND. CD/DL/LP

Early On-U combo's first LP since 1982's *Lows & Highs*

As Adrian Sherwood's house band immediately before and after the On-U label's foundation, Creation Rebel – AKA The Arabs, when backing Prince Far-I – cut some of the most extraordinary dub/reggae records of the 1978-'82 period, enhanced by their overseer's visionary aural zing. Forty-one years on, a loose aggregation fronted by 'Crucial' Tony Phillips (guitar), Charlie 'Eskimo' Fox (drums) and Veral Rose (AKA Mr Magoo, percussion) here make a wonderfully upbeat, Sherwood-produced comeback. It largely supplants the deep-space dub of, say, 1980's *Starship Africa*, with a mix of vocal tunes showcasing Phillips' soulful tenor, and DJ exhortations from Daddy Freddy and databanked Prince Far I (ingeniously interwoven on This Thinking Feeling), alongside instrumentals lit up by tootling melodies and synth washes from Italian keyboard presidente Gaudi, variously tinged with jazz (Salutation Gardens) and exotica (Crown Hill Road). Dub purists will bask in cowbell-tapping That's More Like It, surely leaving every type of reggae fan sated.

Andrew Perry

Idris Ackamoor & The Pyramids

★★★★

Afro Futuristic Dreams

STRUT. CD/DL/LP

Past, present and future collide on cosmic jazz troupe's best offering yet.

The world has finally caught up with Idris Ackamoor. One-time saxophonist in Cecil Taylor's Black Music Ensemble, he's been in a rich vein of form since 2016 comeback *We Be All Africans* put his Afro-jazz-funk fusion back in vogue, proving an out-there festival sensation. While the title track and springy 13-minute sing-along Thank You God play to core strengths – his fiery alto and caressing tenor matched by Sun Ra-style chants and psychedelic flourishes – producer Malcolm Catto (Heliocentrics) dials up the rhythmic intensity on the harsh, electric guitar-driven Truth To Power and frenzied strings of Nice It Up. A triumph of healing and connection, experimentalism balanced out by emotional heft, it finds Ackamoor – a full half-century since debut *Lalibela* – in rude health.

Andy Cowan

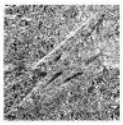
Say She She

★★★★

Silver

COLEMINE. CD/DL/LP

Vocal trio make album No. 2 their magnum opus.



While last year's *Prism* was a four-star introduction, by the time it was released, the discodelic trio (Piya Malik, Sabrina Mileo Cunningham and Nya Gazelle Brown) had upped their songwriting game, so subsequent singles (Forget Me Not; Reeling) suggested there was better to come. No such intrigue this time: the 16 tracks include those singles plus recent playlist hits C'est Si Bon and Astral Plane, and feel like a leap forward. Having three harmonising lead vocalists is a terrific starting point, but their band shine too, whether it's a 1960s rave-up, 1970s quiet storm or early 1980s dancefloor. If you're already hooked, there's still much new to investigate, with politics to the fore (Echo In The Chamber, Entry Level and NORMA). The highlight is the nine-minute title track – confidently showcasing everything Say She She do well. A joy.

David Hutcheon

Mammatus

★★★★

Expanding Majesty

SILVER CURRENT. DL/LP

Sprawling psychedelia from Santa Cruz stoners.

Hatching from the same fertile Californian acid rock scene that gave us Comets On Fire, Santa Cruz trio Mammatus have been silent for eight years now, but

they haven't been idle. Indeed, the evident toil spent on their fifth album has yielded their best work, an epic 69-minute suite that perfectly matches their proggy ambition to their stoner-rock brawn. There's a spiritual yearning to these four lengthy tracks, composing a vision of psychedelia that's more about transcendent experience than cheap thrill. This vibe finds its clearest expression in the swathes of synthesizer that robe the intense math rock tessellations of the opening title track, the ecstatic harmonies that accompany By The Sky's sulphurous electric guitar reveries, the mammoth ascending riff that builds throughout the aptly-titled Foreveriff. This is space rock that's reaching for the infinite – and, in its finest moments, touches the sublime.

Stevie Chick

Pachyman

★★★

Switched-On

ATO. CD/DL/LP

Second helping of easy-cheesy space-age dub from Puerto Rico's Pachy Garcia.

After debuting in teenage reggae combos in the Caribbean, Garcia relocated to LA, played in Echo Park alt-ensembles and finally went solo, posting dubbed-out instrumentals on YouTube. Where 2021's *The Return Of…* closely resembled London's retro-JA worshipper Prince Fatty, this follow-up reinforces those sonic fundaments – lolloping bass lines, razor-edged Hammond, rimshots crashing through an echo chamber – before diversifying, as hinted in its title, into vintage-synth experimentation. Ambient keyboards wash through Toyota Nuevo's near-Tropicália, while Organ Roller recalls *Moon Safari*-era Air, and Nua! adds barrages of disco syn-drum 'pow's. Garcia adds textural voicing, too, notably on the bossa nova-ish Trago Coqueto (read: flirtatious drink). By penultimate Mi Sala, synths ripple abstractly with virtually zero reggae presence, before You Looked At Me closes out with a synthesized take on Augustus Pablo's Far East sound. As before, *Switched-On* may sound slight on paper, even annoying, but its enthusiasm proves inescapably infectious.

Andrew Perry

Creation Rebel: (from left) Mr Magoo, Eskimo Fox and Crucial Tony make a wonderfully upbeat comeback.

© Laura Lewis

WORLD

BY DAVID HUTCHEON

Anoushka Shankar

★★★★

Chapter I: Forever, For Now

LEITER. DL/LP

First in a trilogy of mini-albums by a star having a purple patch.

Like her father, Ravi, the sitar player seems incapable of sitting still musically: last year she released *Between Us…* with the Metropole Orkest; a politically charged single, In Her Name; and shared a stage with Arooj Aftab (her playing elevates the resulting *Live In London* LP). Now, with Aftab in the producer's chair and label owner Nils Frahm adding percussion, keyboards, harmonium and eerie glass harmonica, she returns to the Indian classical/electronica blend with which she started creating her own identity 20 years ago, her collaborators' hands audible throughout. Daydreaming is a beautiful morning raga; What Will We Remember? would work superbly soundtracking a horror film. Shankar describes this as the first in an "evolving story", a trilogy of more spontaneous work with different creative partners to be recorded between tours, rather than an LP's grand, landmark statement. Can't wait for *Chapter II*.

ALSO RELEASED

Idrissa Soumaoro

★★★★

Diré

MIERUBA. CD/DL/LP

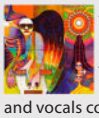
Famous primarily as the teacher who brought together Amadou & Mariam, the veteran singer-guitarist had previously only released two albums, and this third highlights what a shame that is. From desert blues (Diré Taga) to rumba (I Djidja) via Malian funk (N'den Tedi), this is great stuff. Old school, definitely, but the arrangements and organ make it a timeless collection.

Chouk Bwa & The Ångströmers

★★★★

Somanti

BONGO JOE. CD/DL/LP



Another album made without too much prep: the thunderous percussion, rhythms and vocals come from Haitian vodou rituals, the electronics and effects emanate from Belgian clubs. The two groups first met in 2016 but had been separated by circumstances since 2019; a tour in 2022 culminated in a day in the studio (and three weeks of production). Play very loud.

Peter Culshaw

★★★★

Music From The Temple Of Light

ISKRA. CD/DL/LP

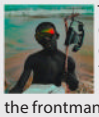
Inspired by the poet Rumi – "The lamps are different, the light's the same" – and recorded in London, pre-war Odesa, and Mumbai, where English composer Culshaw hooked up with flute and tabla players and vocalists to record a series of mantras and chants with jazz undertones. "Transporting, exquisite music," says Shirley Collins, who knows a thing or two about that stuff.

Onipa

★★★

Off The Grid

REAL WORLD. CD/DL/LP



This Anglo-Ghanaian quartet – a set-up that allows the biography to claim the frontman, Kweku Sackey, is "a shaman from Accra by way of Sheffield" – came together when Nubiyan Twist's Tom Excell played Sackey his father's vintage West African vinyl. That foundation in tradition is apparent even if there's a modern element here that makes it perfect for 2023 clubland. *DH*

Another fine mess: Irreversible Entanglements go in search of the light.

Irreversible Entanglements

★★★★

Protect Your Light

IMPULSE! CD/DL/LP

East Coast "free jazz quintet with an experimental punk mentality" make the best of their big move to Impulse! after three LPs for International Anthem.

THREE DAYS IN the Van Gelder studio have produced a healing effusion of light and shade as well as the sound and fury with which the name of Irreversible Entanglements is often associated. Heady opener Free Love channels the immortal bass line of Arthur Blythe's Down San Diego Way with the same infectious insouciance that the title track of 2021's *Open The Gates* doffed its revolutionary cap to Art Ensemble Of Chicago's Theme De Yoyo. Meanwhile the thrillingly stentorian vocal interventions of Camae Ayewa (AKA Moor Mother) have never been better integrated into the fluid virtuosity of rhythm section Luke Stewart and Tcheser Holmes and horn duo Aquiles Navarro and Keir Neuringer. Janice A Lowe's additional piano provides the perfect jump-off point for Ayewa's quest for "a light at the end of what can't be illuminated" in the devastating Our Land Back, and this album as a whole is a definitive statement by a peerless ensemble.

Ben Thompson

Piper Ferguson

Hey Colossus

★★★★

In Blood

WRONG SPEED. CD/DL/LP

UK hardcore perennials celebrate 20 years of no compromise with best yet.

A highlight of 2020's *Dances/Curses*, The Mirror – their collaboration with Mark Lanegan, and one of the late singer's final recordings – feels now like a harbinger for the darker-than-midnight gravity of Hey Colossus's fourteenth full-length. This ever-evolving hardcore unit channel Lanegan's solemn power throughout, along with the seductive economy and sleekness of his erstwhile compatriots Queens Of The Stone Age; these unforgiving anthems are Hey Colossus's most accessible and irresistible to date. Amid eminently crafted, often melodic and occasionally bruising songs, frontman Paul Sykes uses his romantic croon wisely, twisting Can't Feel Around Us from gothic Vashti Bunyan vamp into post-punk pell-mell with grace, and slow-building the simmer of Over Cedar Limb into a brooding epic with its own gravitational pull. The sound of a too- often-overlooked mainstay of British underground rock reaching glorious maturity, *In Blood* is a modest masterpiece.

Stevie Chick

Goat

★★★

Medicine

ROCKET RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Mysterious Swedish outfit deliver psychedelia in excelsis on fifth LP.

Much of what made Goat's reputation – their ever-evolving line-ups, ceremonial masks and voodoo-speckled backstory – now seems surplus to requirements. *Medicine* offers a potent reminder that their music holds sufficient intrigue all by itself. Whether channelling folk, desert rock or even doom metal (a hulking cover of GÅS's Sabbath-worshipping Join The Resistance is an on-loan highlight), the word 'psychedelic' remains a firmly underlined prefix here. Prone as Goat are to going far, far out, occasionally they get lost in their own jams – the meandering Tripping In The Graveyard definitely overstays its welcome. By contrast, Impermanence And Death captures them at their best – its confection of eerie chants, jaunty flute and stoner guitar sounding, thrillingly, like they're convening a black mass and faerie gathering at the same time.

George Garner

Setting

★★★★

Shone A Rainbow Light On

PARADISE OF BACHELORS. CD/DL/LP

Banjo maestro's new heavenly music corporation.

As a solo artist, Nathan Bowles has spent the last few years reconfiguring American folk traditions into a kind of North Carolinan kosmische: 2018's *Plainly Mistaken* album makes a good entry point. His latest project, though – a trio with Jaime Fennelly on harmonium, zither and synths, and percussionist Joe Westerlund – pushes away from the roots and closer to the stratosphere, thanks in part to his applying some heavily Frippertronic effects to his trusty banjo. Often, the music's organic foundations are rendered unrecognisable: opener We Center is levitational kin to Fripp and Eno's *No Pussyfooting*, or Cale and Riley's *Church Of Anthrax*. Elsewhere, the ebbing post-jazz fugue state of Zoetropics is in a neighbouring zone to that of Natural Information Society, while A Sun Harp's freeform pluck and rustle bears comparison with The Necks. High-end reference points for a record that spectacularly reconciles micro-detailed improv with deep-listening ambience.

John Mulvey

Tirzah

★★★★

Trip9love…???

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

R&B songstress strips it back to the bare bones on third Mica Levi collaboration.

The thrills and spills get even more bespoke on Tirzah's latest link up with soundtracker Mica Levi. The twisted R&B that coursed through her meditations on romance (2018 debut *Devotion*) and motherhood (*Colourgrade*) takes a hard left swerve as her hushed, probing vocals weave around the brittle beats of an entry-level drum machine. While there's a pronounced sonic disquiet to Levi's ghostly pianos, seemingly played in another room on U All The Time and He Made, the pair push the margins harder on brutal, minimalist guitar workout 2 D I C U V (think a lost '80s My Bloody Valentine demo). Tirzah matches the spacious, hazy intimacy of Levi's often distorted creations with unself-conscious melodies, as if singing in her sleep, finding beauty in imperfection and transience.

Andy Cowan

The Jeffrey Lee Pierce Sessions Project

★★★★

The Task Has Overwhelmed Us

GLITTERHOUSE. CD/DL/LP

Fourth LP tribute to The Gun Club's late songwriter.

It's testament to the strength and depth of Pierce's compositional bequest that the 'project' instigated in 2006 by his mid-'80s collaborator Cypress Grove has both momentum and fresh material for this 18-track, fourth double-album. Previous visitors can second-guess certain protagonists: a duet from Nick Cave and Debbie Harry, here voicing On The Other Side in tight unison, with melancholy backing *à la* early-2000s Bad Seeds; Mark Lanegan growling a beatific Go Tell The Mountain; Jim Jones & The Righteous Mind rendering Going Down The Red River as bloodshot-eyed punk-blues; and Pierce himself, his ever-quavering Yellow Eyes sublimely coloured in anew with ghostly backing vocals and off-beam piano from Cave and Warren Ellis. Outstanding new additions include Dave Gahan (gospel-drenched Mother Of Earth), The Coathangers (ramalama La La Los Angeles) and Day-Glo fashionista Pam Hogg (I Was Ashamed). The whole trip's splendid and guarantees transcendence for the love of Jeffrey.

Andrew Perry

The Anchoress

★★★★

Versions

DROWNED IN SOUND. CD/DL/LP

Loving covers record from Welsh musician/producer.

After the blood-streaked anger and pain of 2021's *The Art Of Losing*, it's no shock that Catherine Anne Davies should choose a covers LP as her next release. Yet while *Versions* might represent space to take a creative breath, to hit pause on the need to excavate her own emotions, there's no loosening of commitment or intensity here, especially on the hushed version of Nirvana's Pennyroyal Tea. Davies' selections are cheeringly unbothered by the need to seem like a connoisseur of the obscure or a daring eviscerator: she delivers a full-hearted take on The Cure's Friday I'm In Love, taps into the thrum of grief in R.E.M.'s Sweetness Follows and tangles herself up in New Order's bolt of blue with Bizarre Love Triangle. Admiration, too, for including All About Eve's Martha's Harbour, a thrill for teenage goth girls everywhere.

Victoria Segal

Squirrel Flower

★★★★

Tomorrow's Fire

FULL TIME HOBBY. CD/DL/LP

Third album from rapidly developing Ella Williams.

Having recorded her second album, *Planet (i)*, at P.J. Harvey's studio in Bristol with Portishead's Adrian Utley, Ella Williams retreated back home to the United States to craft the third Squirrel Flower album. A graduate of Boston's indie scene, she's leapt forwards once more with a sound that's bigger, bolder but only slightly less alt than previously offered. What Kind Of Dream Is This? recasts her as an even more melancholy Lana Del Rey; the brooding Finally Rain is not the first time she's discussed climate change; and Canyon – a tribute to Williams' mother – cranks up the riffs like grunge-phase Neil Young. Alley Light is a conscious attempt to channel her inner Springsteen, while the vocal arrangements on an update of her own, I Don't Use A Trash Can, are dazzling. There's almost too much to bask in.

John Aizlewood

Laura Misch

★★★★

Sample The Sky

ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT. CD/DL/LP

Hello trees, hello sky: London electronic composer ventures into the wild.

The evocative title of Laura Misch's debut is part mission statement, with the biomedical scientist-turned-musician attempting to sonically immerse herself in nature. Misch originated some of these tracks walking outdoors playing saxophone while wearing a portable looper rig, and Hide To Seek employs a sample by sound designer James Bulley using acoustic detectors to record the vibrational sounds made by trees. If this all sounds like a bit of a hippy rap, it certainly lends the album a lyrical conceit (and follows Björk's similarly naturalistic *Fossora*). Misch's voice is warm and soulful, her sax hypnotic rather than showy and knitted together with synth arpeggios and warm electronic beats, as supported by Marysia Osu's dreamy harp and Tomáš Kašpar's tastefully simpatico guitar. Taken altogether, it's an often beautiful, reverie-inducing album.

Tom Doyle

Buffalo Nichols

★★★★

The Fatalist

FAT POSSUM. CD/DL/LP

Powerful, moving follow-up to 2021's eponymous debut.

The Milwaukee-based folk blues revivalist's second album pushes the genre forward with ballads and protest songs scored by 808 trap beats and finger-picking guitar drone. Self-produced and recorded at home, its era-smudging approach works best on a haunting cover of Blind Willie Johnson's You're Gonna Need Somebody On Your Bond. Blending triggers of Charley Patton's version with Nichols' deep twisted tones, its inference – as the album title suggests – is desolate. The inequality and inequity that gave birth to blues music still exists and this sense of despondency runs throughout. "I just don't know the difference between love and sympathy," he intones on plaintive break-up song The Difference, while The Fatalist Blues uses the aforementioned Johnson's Samson And Delilah to explore the cycle of violence.

Lois Wilson

Sax (not) in the city: Laura Misch takes a walk on the wild side.

Ella Pavlides

Islet

★★★

Soft Fascination

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

Welsh avantists' fourth LP sees them getting less avant.

Best known for instrument swapping on-stage and in the studio and the tendency to freeform, Islet have transformed their world. Founding member John 'JT' Thomas has re-joined and each of the four members now stick to their own instrument. While hardly an embrace of convention, *Soft Fascination* is an album of two halves. The first is a clattering rush of snappy euphoria fuelled by Thomas's percussion and overlaid with Emma Damon Thomas's languid, echoey voice. Beginning with the drone-drenched instrumental An Open Door, the second harkens to the out-there Islet of yore. Woolgathering is all military drums, Krautrock pulses and Liz Fraser-esque vocal layering, while the more jagged Discipline is an update on New York no wave. Right now, it's hard to glean which Islet is their way ahead, but they might be heading down two equally fulfilling paths.

John Aizlewood

Joshua Redman

★★★★

Where We Are

BLUE NOTE. CD/DL/LP

Saxophonist teams up with Gabrielle Cavassa on reflective Blue Note debut.

Joshua Redman has long suppressed a yen to record a vocal LP. Used to his full-bodied tenor being the lead, he cedes the focal point here to vulnerable-voiced balladeer Gabrielle Cavassa. It's a winning move. The Californian tenderly essays a series of carefully sculpted covers (Betty Carter's New England; Springsteen's Streets Of Philadelphia) with a yearning openness, as if revealing diary entries. Elsewhere the sensitive rapport between Redman and his band (Aaron Parks, Joe Sanders, Brian Blade) is augmented by intricate, telling contributions from guests Kurt Rosenwinkel, Peter Bernstein and Joel Ross (the vibraphonist lighting up Chicago Blues' seamless mix of Count Basie and Sufjan Stevens). Add a rousing take on John Coltrane's Alabama and it's a graceful triumph of understated virtuosity in service to the song.

Andy Cowan

FOLK

BY JIM WORTH

Martin Simpson and Thomm Jutz

★★★★

Nothing But Green Willow: The Songs Of Mary Sands And Jane Gentry

TOPIC. CD/DL/LP

Wonder in the mountains: transatlantic celebration of Appalachian songs.

On a WW1-era trip to America, collector Cecil Sharp gathered over 90 songs from North Carolina singers Mary Sands and Jane Gentry, part of a huge cache of Appalachian material he believed had survived intact for centuries after going West with English settlers. Subsequent scholars would disagree, and with Brit-folk magus Martin Simpson and German-born Americana expert Thomm Jutz providing sparkly acoustic backing for a raft of British and American singers, *Nothing But Green Willow* underlines elegantly that the songs have roots all over the UK, and took on significant flavours from black, native American, Celtic and other European traditions during their time in the mountains. Sun-dappled and splendid, Emily Portman's Fair Annie, Odessa Settles' Pretty Saro, Angeline Morrison's The Suffolk Miracle, Cara Dillon's Come All You Fair And Tender Ladies and Tim O'Brien's Edwin In The Lowlands Low ensure that this is anything but an academic exercise.

ALSO RELEASED

Various

★★★★

Ballads Of Seduction, Fertility And Ritual Slaughter

WAS IST DAS? CD/DL/LP

Belatedly released in 1998, Paul Giovanni's faux-trad soundtrack to 1973 Hammer horror The Wicker Man may be as influential a release for millennial freak-folkers as *Liege & Lief* and *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter* combined. On this all-star tribute LP, Magpahi's prog take on May Pole, Meg Baird's spooky Willow's Song and Sharron Kraus's disorienting Sing Cuckoo encapsulate the righteous Bagpuss crucifixion vibe.

Carla Fuchs

★★★

Songbird

TALKING ELEPHANT. CD/DL

Thea Gilmore had the first rifle through Sandy Denny's unused lyrics for 2011's *Don't Stop Singing*, but – encouraged by The Lady's daughter Georgia – German singer Carla Fuchs has found plenty more worth singing. The filter is very much off for the glum The Sixpence ("I'm in such a terrible shape and the country's just like me"), but if *Songbird* can feel like an intrusion into personal space, its Sandy soundworld is eerily accurate.

Kathryn Tickell & The Darkening

★★★★

Cloud Horizons

RESILIENT. CD/DL

"This is where I live my life now but in dreams I travel far," sings small pipes maestra Kathryn Tickell on Bone Music, the Northumbrian's imaginings taking her to unexpectedly cosmic places on her second album with The Darkening. Thunderclap drums, trip-hop space and Amy Thatcher's accordion sex up Long For Light and Gods Of War, while stomper-romp Clogstravaganza threatens to go full-on Horslips folk rock. Canny/uncanny.

Various

★★★★

Sing Yonder Vol. 1

SING YONDER. CD/DL

A stylish "for Dummies" guide to songs from the Roud Index, Karl Sinfield's Sing Yonder booklets offer an un-fusty way for newbies to explore and play traditional songs. This compilation, featuring new recordings from some of the designer's favourite performers, shows how the material shines unaccompanied (Burd Ellen's The Dun Broon Bride) or with extra doomy reverb (Henry Parker's Cure-ish Long Lankin). Now form a band. *JW*

The daisy age: Modern Nature's Jack Cooper strives for authentic existential expression.

New dimensions

The third album from Jack Cooper's fluid alias aims to make "something that no one has heard before." By David Sheppard.

Modern Nature

★★★★

No Fixed Point In Space

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

PARTLY A REACTION to the grid-like predictability of contemporary digital recording, *No Fixed Point In Space*, true to its Einstein (via Merce Cunningham)-derived title, is predicated on the eschewing of strict rhythms, time signatures, traditional song structures and even syntactically orthodox lyrics. In their place, Blackpool-born, Cambridgeshire-based Cooper, alongside some estimable confrères, has sought to maximise the textural and dimensional possibilities of part-scored, part-spontaneous ensemble playing alloyed to spare, allusive vocals – an approach influenced by contemplation of the natural world. "I wanted the music and the words to feel like roots, branches, mycelium, the intricacies of a dawn chorus, neurons firing, the unknown," he says in the accompanying notes.

The seeds for this approach were sewn on Modern Nature's previous LP, 2021's *Island Of Noise*, whose liquid folk rock/lambent free jazz conflation confirmed a substantial step change from Cooper's erstwhile project, fragile indie rock duo Ultimate Painting. His subsequent evolution is mirrored by the range and eminence of his collaborators: sax deity Evan Parker featured on *Island Of Noise*, while here the musicians include Chris Abrahams, of storied Australian improvisers The Necks, members of avant-garde classical quintet Apartment House and veteran vocalist Julie Tippetts (formerly Driscoll).

The ensemble's amorphous soundworld is made immediately apparent, opener Tonic plunging straight into its web of plangent electric guitar, plucked double bass, beaten piano strings and hovering woodwind, the permutation of which, as on so much here, perpetually oscillating between warm, consonant drift and wintery angularity. The interplay frames Cooper's hushed, fragmentary observations about a firelit room, his descriptive phrases – "a tender black", "eggshell thin" – poetic descriptors of the music's mutable textures.

The ensuing Murmuration presents a similarly woozy, pointillist palette – pattering ride cymbal and Abraham's obligato piano partially codifying unresolved guitar, Heather Roche's smoky clarinet figures and further adumbrated vocals ("Harmonics bounce around the air"). Seemingly at random, the loosely connected threads coalesce into a sweet, gentle chord, Tippetts' voice harmonising mellifluously with Cooper's to enunciate the title word in a way that is at least vaguely analogous with the cleaving of starlings into shapeshifting clusters across a darkening sky.

Elsewhere, the music retains its freeform, intermittently dulcet quality, while erring, variously, towards austere folk (Orange), mysterious pastoralism (Sun) and, on the Tippetts-decorated Ensõ, minimalistic, soulful reverie. There are hints along the way of Talk Talk's *Spirit Of Eden*, Mark Hollis's eponymous 1998 solo album and Joshua Abrams' 'post-classical' quartet Town & Country, and while Cooper's resolve to make entirely novel music ultimately proves chimeric, his rejection of folk/rock convention is no idle caprice; the striving for authentic existential expression here is refreshingly, often compellingly, uncompromising. In that sense at least, *No Fixed Point In Space* is as on point as it is off grid.

Juliana Hatfield

★★★

Juliana Hatfield Sings ELO

AMERICAN LAUNDROMAT. CD/DL/LP

Another covers set after previous nods to Olivia Newton-John and The Police.

Famed as a ubiquitous, influential figure on Boston's alternative scene, Juliana Hatfield also loves a pop cover. For her, parsing the blueprint of someone else's creation is akin to "a working vacation"; one wherein know-how pertinent to her own, very much ongoing songwriting career, is gleaned. Targeting 10 ELO songs from nine different ELO studio LPs plus stand-alone single Showdown, this affectionate, strings-detached tribute reveals what Jeff Lynne might have sounded like had he been raised on college campus indie, rather than Roy Orbison and The Fabs. Hatfield eschews radical reinventions, but her peeling away of the more finessed layers surrounding Lynne's indestructible melodies/chord sequences works a treat on Can't Get It Out Of My Head, Strange Magic and Telephone Line. An ELO super-fan, she also flags deep(ish) cuts such as the dark Bluebird Is Dead.

James McNair

Hauschka

★★★★

Philanthropy

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

First solo outing in four years for Oscar-winning German pianist.

Latterly consumed by soundtrack composition (notably 2022's *All Quiet On The Western Front*, which scooped the Best Original Score Oscar), Volker 'Hauschka' Bertelmann's return to his prepared piano-based instrumental muse is inspired, as the title suggests, by human compassion and altruism – an appreciative conception, perhaps, from an artist whose career has been wafted loftily from its beginnings in the liminal realm of 'post-classical' experiment. *Philanthropy* certainly contains some life-affirming passages, not least opener Diversity's lovely rippling arpeggios and buoyant synth bass, and the playfully strutting, dub-indebted Magnanimity. Elsewhere, a more pensive and, yes, cinematic, mood pervades, affectingly on the misty piano etude Limitation Of A Lifetime and the tender Loved Ones, which, abetted by smears of Laura Wiek's cello and Karina Buschinger's violin, navigates fertile territory pitched somewhere between Erik Satie's Gymnopédies and delicate ambient music.

David Sheppard

Vanishing Twin

★★★★

Afternoon X

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

The London-based collective keep on in search of space.

Following the departure of long-time member Philip Baerwalde, remaining trio Cathy Lucas, Valentina Magaletti and Susumu Mukai have gone on to explore edgier corners of psychedelia and Krautrock. Although equivocal opening Melty and the title track suggest hazy down-tempo, the rest leads to the beyond-subconscious realms of Linda Perhacs (Lazy Garden), 13th Floor Elevators (Marbles) and Can (The Down Below). Clocking in at nearly eight and a half minutes, the latter assembles into an impressive suite; twirling drums and an undercurrent of bass at the start, eventually building to a ringing polyphony. Ultimately, *Afternoon X* finds its strength in contrast: while the mostly languid pace suggests meditation, the lyrics reveal a theme of carpe diem. On closer Subito, Lucas seeks urgency: "Unfreeze the water course/ Give me all that noise/I could die tomorrow/What are we waiting for?"

Irina Shtreis

Madder Rose

★★★★

No One Gets Hurt Ever

TOME. CD/DL/LP

NY swoon-poppers rediscover their sweet edge.

Their 2019 reunion LP *To Be Beautiful* was a sombre set coloured by loss and the passing of the years; darkly satisfying, it nevertheless left the listener craving the sugary hit of Madder Rose's earlier work. This follow-up is no less downcast – guitarist Billy Cote identifies its themes as "divorce, broken promises and partial redemption" – but honeys the disillusionment and ambivalence with classic pop craft; Mary Lorson's lullaby vocals and Cote's eloquent squall. This acute balance of bitter and sweetness was always their calling card, and the best of *No One Gets Hurt Ever* – the shimmering Velvets-esque sketch of Bird (Splinters), Mystery Date's mesmeric guitar hook – equals their finest work. Meanwhile, Do You Know About My Lover? – channelling the Everlys and built around Laura Cannell's eerie violin – is remarkable, their dark magic incarnate.

Stevie Chick

Armand Hammer's Billy Woods (right) and Elucid: taking it to the next blood-sugar level.

Armand Hammer

★★★★

We Buy Diabetic Test Strips

FAT POSSUM. CD/DL/LP

Alt-rap man of the moment Billy Woods reboots his duo project.

FOR THOSE of us with a less committed relationship to new hip-hop than we had of old, underground artists can still remind us of rap's enduringly rich possibilities. A case in point: New York wordsmith Billy Woods, the son of a Zimbabwean political activist and a Jamaican literature professor, whose 20-year stealth career has latterly erupted in a glut of superb albums (cf, this year's *Maps*). That run continues on *We Buy Diabetic Test Strips*, the sixth outing for his Armand Hammer duo with fellow rapper Elucid. JPEGMAFIA and Run The Jewels' El-P are among the producers, while Moor Mother, on poetry, and Shabaka Hutchings, on flute, contribute to the dislocated, jazz-inflected ambience. But ultimately, it's Woods and Elucid who provide the intense, erudite, funny through-line: try the hyper-flexing The Gods Must Be Crazy, packed with allusions to Gil Scott-Heron, Harry Belafonte, Toyota Cressidas, white women "interpolating Beyoncé" and one exceptional lie: "Henry Kissinger's my album's only feature."

John Mulvey

Kevin Drew

★★★★

Aging

ARTS & CRAFTS. CD/DL/LP

Canadian indie rock veteran clocks the passing of time.

Following Drew's solo albums *Spirit If…* (2007) and *Darlings* (2014), the Broken Social Scene lynchpin's 2021 LP *Influences* was a detour into synth-based instrumentals under the name K.D.A.P. *Aging*, then, is closer in spirit to the first two, a gripping, sweltering journey into the aging process, characterised by pain and grief and the acknowledgement that the hedonistic party of a rock-band lifestyle has begun to wind down. Solo, Drew typically strips back the BSS collective's crowded musical dynamic, but if *Aging*'s core of rumbling piano and crepuscular synths feels more alone than ever, it still shares DNA with BSS's default anthemic fervour. A coiled Party Oven ("We partied into the grave/Was that OK?") is not unlike U2's One, whilst Out In The Fields has hallmarks of Springsteen. Drew's life lessons are as much about coping as suffering, such as the ultra-sombre finale titled You're Gonna Get Better. "Don't forget," Drew murmurs. "Love is free."

Martin Aston

Blonde Redhead

★★★★

Sit Down For Dinner

SECTION 1. CD/DL/LP

New York art-punk veterans revel in the potential of soft power.

As Blonde Redhead have evolved from their early, chaotic no wave tornados to their poised, polished later work, the group's essential melancholic character has only drawn into clearer focus. Their tenth album – a reunion of sorts, as the often-combustive trio quietly parted ways following 2014's self-released *Barragán* – is their most dulcet, but the plushness only accentuates the songs' pointedly bleak mood, sounding in places like Portishead shorn of beats. Their songwriting and production has never sounded so boldly experimental as on the Philip Glass aspirations of Via Savona's repeating fragments, or so confidently mature as I Thought You Should Know; ghostly '70s adult pop freighted with all the ambiguity and agony of an existential European movie. The themes – anxiety, longing and dislocation – are familiar, but here Blonde Redhead address their potent heartaches with renewed grace and strength.

Stevie Chick

Alexander Richter

Burning Spear

★★★★

No Destroyer

BURNING MUSIC. CD/DL

Fully self-sufficient reggae icon's welcome return.

On his first new studio album in 15 years, reclusive reggae figurehead Burning Spear mixes the personal and political. He implores humanity to achieve compassion, praises reggae's everlasting qualities while airing grievances with industry sharks, and the Burning Band supply bluesy guitar accompaniment, understated female harmony vocals, expressive horns and plenty of well-placed percussive embellishments. Opening number The Spear sets the tone by promoting peace and love instead of ego trips, with the defiant title track also emphasising that our hero has no need for fame. Independent highlights that Spear has been a self-sufficient entity for decades, and although Talk, No Fool and They Think all deplore music business rip-offs, the upbeat Open The Gate commends Chris Blackwell and Clement Dodd of Studio One for bringing reggae to the world.

David Katz

Jenny Owen Youngs

★★★

Avalanche

YEP ROC. CD/DL/LP

New Jersey-born singer-songwriter's full-disclosure return.

It's been 10 years since we heard from Youngs, time spent in LA with her wife; this fourth studio album documents the agonising end of that relationship and a path through bleakness to new love. Youngs always had a touch of Liz Phair's indie rock brashness, but now her lucid honesty is underpinned by lush, layered arrangements. The cinematic title track opens with piano, picked guitar, then a hooky melody; lyrics, sung with Aimee Mann or Louise Goffin cool, are throaty, funny and self-deprecating. The motoring country-folk of Everglades is confessional and faux-upbeat: "I don't know what they said/But it's a dirty, rotten lie." Salt, meanwhile, is a highlight, articulate with bitter truths. "You left your wallet/Career alcoholic/See every day as your last day on the job." From slide guitar-soaked come-ons to lo-fi remorse, this is powerful catharsis.

Glyn Brown

Joe Bonamassa

★★★

Blues Deluxe Vol. 2

J&R ADVENTURES. CD/DL/LP

Bonamassa returns to the source.

2003's breakthrough *Blues Deluxe* placed Bonamassa on the continuum of leading blues rock guitarists. To coincide with the 20th anniversary reissue of that largely covers album, he's made a sequel. Recorded live with producer pal Josh Smith, who set out to capture him "in the moment", it's an approach that works, with Bonamassa sounding energised as the studio becomes juke joint and he hungrily attacks Bobby Blue Bland's Twenty-Four Hour Blues, Guitar Slim's Well, I Done Got Over It and Bobby Parker's It's Hard But It's Fair. They're all done pretty straight, but then of course he throws in his trademark 'more is more' soloing, all Bluesbreakers-to-Cream-era Eric Clapton-styled muscle and intensity. It's easy to knock his sometimes route-one approach, but he's the real deal here: paying tribute and enjoying every minute.

Lois Wilson

Allah-Las

★★★★

Zuma 85

CALICO DISCOS. CD/DL/LP

Fifth LP from the LA quartet who formed in the backroom of Amoeba Records in 2008.

On 2019's *LAHS* the West Coast outfit tentatively widened their retro psych-pop and surf remit to include some Manuel Göttsching touches, and on this follow-up they take the kosmische influence further; most daringly on the instrumental title track which mixes field recordings and chimes with murky synths and motorik riffing in search of space. The group go against type again on The Stuff, here playing with the luminous glam rock stylings of solo Lou Reed, while also channelling his antagonistic attitude: "I don't listen to the radio/They keep playing that song again/And the DJ's a computer". But while the group make much of this being "a new era", there are still plenty of moments that conjure nostalgic, dreamy bliss.

Lois Wilson

FILTER ALBUMS EXTRA

Bahamas

★★★

Bootcut

BUSHFIRE. CD/DL/LP

With a crack Nashville band including Vince Gill and Russ Pahl on pedal steel, Afie Jurvanen roots his dry Canadian wit in lush country (only I'll Still revisits the Curtis-funk of 2020's *Sad Hunk*). Adept and funny, but a little goes a long way. *JB*

Coma World

★★★★

Coma Wong

BYRD OUT. DL/LP

Jazzers Betamax and Pete Bennie reconvene with sound artist Raimund Wong. The loosely arranged unease of Tsunami, Calamari and Turbulence combine deep grooves with distended drones, drunken trumpets and strings for something truly otherworldly. *AC*

Das Koolies

★★★★

DK.01

STRANGETOWN. CD/DL/LP/MC

Super Furry Animals minus Gruff Rhys, Das Koolies' 2-LP debut wraps the old band's rave roots around sleek updates of their orch-psych genius. Exhausting in scale, but big compensatory hits of motorik melancholy (Nuthin Sandwich) and oscillatory pop mayhem (Police Next Door). *KC*

Ex-Isles

★★★★

Domestic Sacraments

EX-ISLES. CD/DL

This Belfast duo's second LP of intelligent chamber pop rewards deep listening. Twisty as Cathal Coughlan, resonant as Scott Walker, Paul Devlin's baritone is offset by Jamie Thompson's unpredictable arrangements on witty, mordant Theatre and The Gnashing Ends. *AC*

Kofi Flexxx

★★★★

Flowers In The Dark

NATIVE REBEL RECORDINGS. DL/LP

Masked Kofi Flexxx strongly resembles Shabaka Hutchings (credited as producer). While booming beats, brassy low-end and a choir of flutes bounce off rappers Billy Woods and Elucid, hook-ups with Confucius MC and Siyabonga Mthembu display greater finesse and range. *AC*

Nihiloxica

★★★★

Source Of Denial

CRAMMED DISCS. CD/DL/LP

This second Anglo-Ugandan union of Spooky J and PQ with Kampala's Nilotica Drum Ensemble seethes with anger over UK immigration policy. Be it Olutobazzi's polyrhythms or the title track's trenchant techno, the results are both brain-scrambling and body-moving. *AC*

Jimmy Regal And The Royals

★★★★

First And Last Stop

LUNARIA. CD/DL/LP

Named after their favourite New Orleans bar, this impressive debut from the blues-rooted south London guitar-drum-harmonica three-piece conjures an easy going Mardi Gras vibe with honking horns and screaming church organ. *LW*

Matana Roberts

★★★★

In The Garden...

CONSTELLATION. CD/DL/LP

Chapter five of Roberts' *Coin Coin* odyssey combines composed cacophony with folk spirituals and free-improv. Her jazziest yet, expressive alto-sax and hypnotic spoken words ladle emotional gravitas onto its fevered meditations and splintered storytelling. *AC*

A. Savage

★★★

Several Songs About Fire

ROUGH TRADE. CD/DL/LP

Produced by John Parish and featuring Cate Le Bon, the Parquet Courts singer's second solo album traces lines to both Bill Callahan's downbeat philosophising (Mountain Time) and Jonathan Richman's crafted wit and primal rock'n'roll chug (Elvis In The Army). *JB*

Rachel Sermanni

★★★★

Dreamer Awake

NAVIGATOR. CD/DL/LP

Backed by improv musicians, the Scottish singer-songwriter takes her folk-schooled songs closer to Wilco's wistful spirit on Killer Line, or Nadia Reid's long-dark-night visions on Jacob. An album that examines womanhood, romantic pain and loss, and finds lasting beauty. *JB*

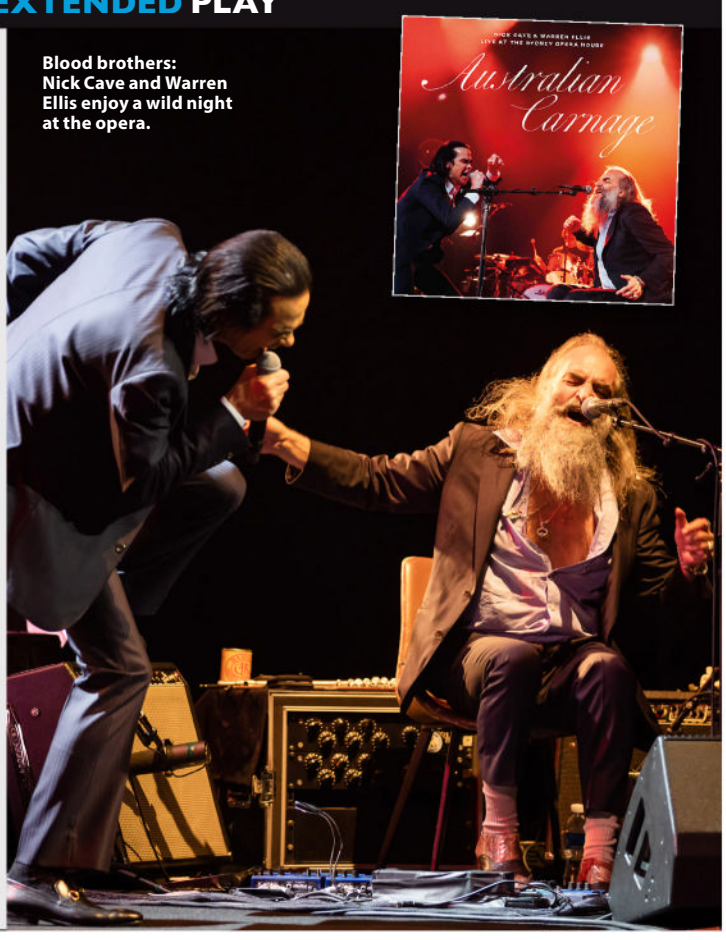
EXTENDED PLAY

Nick Cave And Warren Ellis

Australian Carnage – Live At Sydney Opera House

"Fucking Sydney!" exclaims Nick Cave as he greets the audience at the conclusion of the "incredibly moving" 16-date Australian tour he and close collaborator Warren Ellis completed last December, belatedly marking the release of 2021's *Carnage*. With a band that includes Radiohead's Colin Greenwood, Bad Seed Larry Mullins and backing singers Wendi Rose, Janet Ramus and T Jae Cole, Cave and Ellis bring an untethered energy to *Carnage*'s White Elephant and Hand Of God, newly framing the mysteries of songs from 2016's *Skeleton Tree* and 2019's *Ghosteen*. (*The Lyre Of Orpheus*'s Breathless – "this is a joyful song, so make the fucking most it" – and a cover of T. Rex's Cosmic Dancer are the only chronological outliers). "Go wild," deadpans Cave. "Tear the Sydney Opera House to pieces, rip up the seats and… stuff like that." Such mayhem remains theoretical, but this high-definition document of a remarkable performance still shakes the emotional foundations. Available on streaming services now.

Victoria Segal



Blood brothers: Nick Cave and Warren Ellis enjoy a wild night at the opera.

Daniel Boud

Todd Sickafoose

★★★★

Bear Proof

SECRET HATCH. CD/DL

Worth the wait, the Hadestown producer's first solo set since 2008 is melodically rich, ornamental jazz with delicate turns by Adam Levy, Kirk Knuffke and Ben Goldberg. Its relaxed grooves and shifting dynamics display a masterful, Frisell-like blurring of genre lines. *AC*

Slow Pulp

★★★★

Yard

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

Chicago-based Wisconsin foursome acutely attuned to '90s guitar pop. If Emily Massey's cool, lackadaisical voice, and titles like Slug, Yard and Mud suggest slacker bedroom diarists, songs like the Breeders-worthy single Doubt reveal serious song-writing smarts. *JB*

MARGO CILKER

VALLEY OF HEART'S DELIGHT

"superlative second album from country rock's new star"
9/10
UNCUT

"expertly honed country rock which is as frank & fresh as it is warm & familiar"
THE OBSERVER

Out now LP/CD

THE HANDSOME FAMILY

HOLLOW

"the king & queen of Americana Gothic"
★★★★
Americana Album Of The Month
MOJO

"eleven albums and 30 years in, Brett & Rennie Sparks continue to shape their sound in subtle and persuasive ways"
8/10
UNCUT

Out now LP/CD

ISRAEL NASH OZARKER

"IT'S AN ALBUM THAT UNFURLS LIKE A FLAG ON A BATTLEFIELD, GLORIOUS, TATTERED, DEFIANT, FULL OF BIG CHORUSES, VAULTING HARMONIES, A BRAZENLY WINDSWEPT SOUND"
9/10
AMERICANA ALBUM OF THE MONTH
UNCUT

"A FOLK-ROCK VISIONARY"
MOJO

OUT 20TH OCT LP/CD

The song's not over

How Pete Townshend's futuristic concept inspired his band's 1971 masterpiece. Now with added bells, whistles and a graphic novel. By **Mark Blake**.

The Who

★★★★★

Who's Next/Life House

UMC/POLYDOR. BR/CD/DL/LP

THE HOTEL Navarro, overlooking Central Park, was one of the few New York establishments that would host the ''Orrible 'Oo' in the 1970s. That situation might have changed, though, had Pete Townshend jumped from one of their upstairs windows in April 1971.

Like many Who stories, this one is probably embellished, but illustrates Townshend's creative turmoil. The group were in New York recording what became *Who's Next*, with their rumpled aristocratic co-manager, Kit Lambert, producing. One morning, the guitarist strolled into Lambert's hotel suite and overheard him talking to his secretary, Anya Butler: "If Townshend thinks he can swan over here and take over, he's wrong."

Pete Townshend was already experiencing what he called "confused brainstorms" about the concept behind The Who's new record. Hearing Lambert use his surname so dismissively tipped him over the edge; almost literally, as he rushed towards the open window. "Whether I lived or died seemed of no consequence," he said. But Butler grabbed Townshend's arm and steered him back to safety/reality. Townshend fled New York, and The Who completed their fifth album in England.

"It's like an episode of On The Buses dropped into the middle of Tomorrow's World. But such is The Who's contrary brilliance."

Trinifold Archive, Getty

BACK STORY: TEA AND THEATRE

● In spring 1971, the Who trailered Life House with three experimental free events at London's Young Vic Theatre. Songs from the April 26 show are included here. Townshend intended The Who and their audience to freely interact and for fans to become characters in a Life House film documentary. However, the audience ("freaks and 13-year-old skinheads," according to Townshend) expected a traditional gig. The confusion is captured here when Townshend chastises a young man for dancing during Behind Blue Eyes, and then jokily threatens another: "Come a little bit closer and I'll get ya."

But *Who's Next* grew out of Life House, Townshend's brainstorm about a polluted world, where the population lived indoors, fed on government-controlled entertainment via virtual reality-style suits, and where rebels strove to bring outlawed music to the docile masses.

The trouble is, nobody else understood what he was on about. Townshend felt overwhelmed, and plans for a Life House movie and soundtrack record were abandoned. Instead, The Who and their new producer, Glyn Johns, bowed to commercial pressure, and made a more conventional rock album. Released in August 1971, *Who's Next* was a Number 1 hit, with Won't Get Fooled Again and Baba O'Riley destined to remain in their setlists almost for ever.

While 2000's *Lifehouse Chronicles* box updated the original story, this 10-CD super-deluxe edition traces its role in the context of *Who's Next*. It includes 89 previously unreleased tracks, plus demos, live performances, the ubiquitous Steven Wilson's Atmos Mix of outtakes, a graphic novel, and a book plotting how Townshend's great vision became The Who's greatest work. The whole package is as monolithic as that 2001-style obelisk on the cover.

Apparently, Townshend told Glyn Johns to choose the best songs regardless of the story. But Life House rattles its chains like Marley's Ghost all over *Who's Next*. By including the orphans shipped out elsewhere (Naked Eye and Too Much Of Anything ended up on the 1974 compilation *Odds & Sods*, for instance), this new edition invites listeners to sequence an alternative tracklisting. Although Townshend always wished Johns had included Pure And Easy.

It reveals how Townshend's Teenage Wasteland demo became Won't Get Fooled Again, and includes a version of Love Ain't For Keeping from New York's Record Plant with Mountain's Leslie West playing lead guitar. Meanwhile, the box set's sleevenotes reveal that John Entwistle's song 905 was considered for this project but rejected, before resurfacing on 1978's *Who Are You*.

The one fanciful aspect of Life House that the whole group understood was the notion that music could unite and inspire the world. *Who's Next*'s opening song, Baba O'Riley, embodies this. The moment that three-note piano figure interrupts the synthesizer fanfare suggests the first step on a profound journey, compounded by Daltrey ringing his metaphorical town crier's bell and bellowing, "Out here in the fields…"

The best Who music always sounds like they're grasping for something slightly out of reach, but will die trying. Townshend is especially good at conveying this, with his lost-boy vocal undercutting his lead singer's roar on Bargain and The Song Is Over. Though Daltrey thankfully stops short of stripping the paint from the walls on Getting In Tune.

Who's Next displays all the vaulting ambition of the decade's progressive rock, then, but never disappears up its own fundament. Lyrically, it's a hotch-potch of spiritualism, cybernetics, Sufism and only Townshend knows what. But, musically, it's a blues-rock record where session man Nicky Hopkins' rolling, tumbling piano is as vital as those Jon Pertwee-era Doctor Who synths.

Also, just as Townshend put his previous creation, Tommy, in a Butlin's-style holiday camp, he's not afraid to have fun here. Going Mobile taps into Life House's theme of rebels living outside the law and on the road, but is still a homage to Townshend's new boy-toy, a VW Dodge camper van nicknamed 'Maxine'.

Similarly, there's John Entwistle's composition, My Wife. While Townshend is pondering "the infinite sea" and all that, his bass player is bracing himself for domestic warfare after a weekend on the sauce. It's like an episode of On The Buses dropped into the middle of Tomorrow's World. But such is The Who's contrary brilliance.

The closing double whammy of Behind Blue Eyes and Won't Get Fooled Again compounds the notion of The Who on an epic quest. These two songs launched them into the world's stadia and inspired a thousand imitators striving for the same mix of raw emotion and theatrical drama. But you can't blame the parents for the sins of their children.

A freshly minted Won't Get Fooled Again from San Francisco's Civic Auditorium in December 1971 sounds like The Who achieving the transcendental lift-off Townshend claimed they managed on a good night, and also suggests drummer Keith Moon might spontaneously combust. It's that great.

Who's Next may not have been Pete Townshend's chosen destination, but it encapsulates The Who better than anything before or since. It's the art-school provocateur, the bare-chested rock god and their virtuoso, brandy-soaked rhythm section at their peak. Or, as Townshend says here, "It's the best non-concept album based on a concept that The Who ever made."

Through the looking glass: The Who reflect on the meaning of Life House, 1971.

Making waves: High Tide bring the noise in the late '60s/early' 70s.

High Tide

★★★★

The Complete Liberty Recordings

ESOTERIC. CD

Shock waves: three-CD motherlode for UK acid-rock heavyweights.

"THEY WERE all brilliant musicians, but a bit unstable," newly hired Hawkwind violinist Simon House told Melody Maker in 1974 as he reflected on his time with the doomy High Tide, who made two albums for Liberty at the turn of the 1970s. The band led by Jim Morrison-voiced ex-Misunderstood guitarist Tony Hill spiced their Amon Düül II space racket with gigantic fuzz guitar and folky twists. 1969's *Sea Shanties* is a cult classic, Death Warmed Up and Missing Out epitomising its fusion of West Coast guitars and W11 squat glower. Recorded after the band moved to Dorset, their self-titled follow-up is more eccentric still, The Joke approximating a Tudor Black Sabbath. A final disc includes unheard contemporary demos, but their third album proper seemingly went unrecorded. "For those that dig noise, this is ideal," wrote Record Mirror in a 1969 review. Right they were.

Jim Wirth

Jon Hopkins

★★★★

Immunity

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Mercury-nominated ambient/techno symphony gets birthday makeover.

By the time Jon Hopkins released his fourth album of dense, melodic techno in 2013, he was still only 33 – yet he'd already ticked off enough musical bucket list items to last a career: an Ivor Novello award (for scoring 2010 sci-fi flick, Monsters), a Mercury Prize nomination for *Diamond Mine* (his starkly beautiful tech-folk project with King Creosote), and producing and writing for Coldplay with Brian Eno, who remains a regular collaborator. But Hopkins acknowledges it was *Immunity* that propelled him into the big league. Its tenth birthday sees Hopkins revisiting it with Guy Davie, who mastered the original. Initially, the aim was to do a more 'subtle job'. However, unhappy with the results, the approach was ditched so that the crunching, oppressive throb of Open Eye Signal and fizzing hyper rhythms of Breathe This Air retain their nascent intensity, but –now fed through an expander – get more room to work their magic. Meanwhile, Hopkins featured in the BBC's 2023 Proms season. Another upthrust in an impressive career trajectory.

Stephen Worthy

Kyra

★★★★

Here I Am, I Always Am (Expanded Edition)

DAMAGED GOODS. LP

25th anniversary LP pressing for Headcoatee's solo debut, with fine extra tracks.

One of the gig-going pleasures of the 1990s was the one-two knockout punch of a show by Thee Headcoats and Thee Headcoatees, whose records usually appeared on the Vinyl Japan label, as did this, Headcoatee Kyra's 1998 debut solo album. Billy Childish, Johnny Johnson and Bruce Brand from the former band mostly provide the sterling backing here, setting off Kyra's superb garage punk vocals, featuring one of the best screams this side of the Sonics. She co-wrote several of the songs with Childish, while the extras include a storming take on the Banshees' Love In A Void. The title track is a version of a 1966 Beefheart demo, there's a cover of Agitated by Cleveland proto-punks the Electric Eels, but also a beautiful rendition of Jacques Brel's 1961 chanson, Marieke, sung in French and Dutch. A singular talent, and a very welcome reissue.

Max Décharné

Conrad Schnitzler

★★★

Rot

BUREAU B. CD/DL/LP

50th anniversary edition of Tangerine Dream and Kluster man's solo debut.

Even by the standards of early-'70s German electronica, Conrad Schnitzler was an uncompromising figure. He fled the relatively accessible Tangerine Dream and Kluster for a prolific solo career which would momentarily detour into Norwegian death metal and ended with his death in 2011 from cancer. Comprising two 20-minute instrumentals, 1973's *Rot* (Red) was his first solo LP. At times, such is the harshness of his random freeform loops and cut-ups, it's difficult to listen to, but, in time, beauty and some kind of structure emerges. The track Krautrock may not have titled a genre (Faust's Krautrock appeared in 1973 too and the term was already in use), but it did move at a glacial pace, via spacey plinking, rumbling backdrops and atonal, La Monte Young-esque sharpness. The far from meditative Meditation, meanwhile, was more discordant still.

John Aizlewood

The Wirtschaftswunder

★★★

The Wirtschaftswunder

TAPETE. CD/DL/LP

Salvaged major-label flop from nutty early-'80s West German post-punks.

Much like their Krautrock ancestors, Germany's new wave firebrands displayed a weirdness and severity which often exceeded those of their Anglo-American contemporaries. The Wirtschaftswunder, for instance, were a short-lived all-male multi-national quartet from Limburg whose name translates as 'The Economic Miracle', but who were nonetheless signed by Polydor's domestic arm in the hope that the makers of 1980's DIY *Salmobray* might somehow be tamed to cash in on the Neue Deutsche Welle. Certainly, this eponymous follow-up from 1982 carries infuriating synth-pop ditty Mach Dir Das Leben Schön, a flagrant descendant of Trio's scathingly banal Da Da Da, which struck gold just as The Wirtschaftswunder appeared. The rest, however, is boldly uncommercial, encompassing everything from Beefheartian funk (Rate Mal) and Eno-esque synth-rock (Erste Hilfe), through to north African folk (Tapetto Magico) and jazz chanson (Madame X). It bombed epically but survives here for those après-punk obsessives craving the era's lunatic extreme.

Andrew Perry

Brian Auger's Oblivion Express

★★★★

Complete Oblivion

SOUL BANK MUSIC. CD/LP

From jazz rock to fusion, Oblivion Express's six LPs spanning 1971 to '75.

Brian Auger was recording 1969's *Streetnoise* with the Trinity and Julie Driscoll when he first heard Miles Davis's *In A Silent Way*. "It was a turning point, a way forward for me," the keyboardist told this writer last year. When the Trinity split, he formed the Oblivion Express and, taking Davis's classic LP as his jumping off point, he entered one of his most creative periods, recording six LPs – *Oblivion Express*, *A Better Land*, *Second Wind*, *Closer To It!*, *Straight Ahead* and *Reinforcements* – in five years. Exploring rhythm, melody and space through complex progressive runs to playful disco licks, it's all good stuff, with 1973's *Closer To It!* at its peak. Therein, freedom jazz and dance groove coalesce thrillingly on Auger original Happiness Is Just Around The Bend and covers of Compared To What and Inner City Blues.

Lois Wilson

Slapp Happy

★★★★

Sort Of

WEEK-END. DL/LP

Deluxe vinyl makeover for art brut wünder.

Undeterred by dismal sales for the minimalist classical records Anthony Moore made for Polydor Germany at the turn of the 1970s, Krautrock scene-builder Uwe Nettelbeck persuaded the Englishman to deliver the schlager-wealthy label a saleable pop record. As this remastered edition bears witness, Moore drafted in his then girlfriend Dagmar Krause, wise-ass school pal Peter Blegvad and half of Faust to make Slapp Happy's 1972 debut. The band billed themselves as "champions of the Douanier Rousseau sound, naïve rock", but *Sort Of* is a clever clogs analogue of the first two Eno LPs with immense knowing at its heart. Blue Flower (later covered by Mazzy Star), I Got Evil and battery-powered torch song Small Hands Of Stone are indicative of their sorcerer's apprentice splicing of The Velvet Underground's third LP with the Threepenny Opera and the 1910 Fruitgum Company. Kind of cool.

Jim Wirth

The Fall

★★★★

Shift-Work

PROPER/UMC. LP

On a major label in 1991, MES grapples with clarity on LP 13.

The second of three LPs for the Fontana label – then home to Tears For Fears, James and Swing Out Sister – *Shift-Work* is maligned by some Fall zealots. Is this due to the clarity of its electronic rock production, and the relative ease with which its themes could, by Fall standards, be understood? Back on vinyl, its reappraisal affords abundant kicks. As well as suspicious popular culture evisceration – Idiot Joy Showland glares at Manchester's soon-to-expire baggy Petri dish, while telly-basher The War Against Intelligence suggests what a Gogglebox contender grudgemaster-orator Mark E Smith would have made – there's also MES's lesser-glimpsed tender side, with Edinburgh Man and Rose revealing unfamiliar yearnings. Also repressed on wax are 1990's *Extricate* and 1992's *Code: Selfish*, after which The Fall returned to the independent arena for another quarter-century of chaotic genius. A useful entry point, *Shift-Work* is a stimulating chapter in that continuum.

Ian Harrison

Ryuichi Sakamoto

★★★★

Ongaku Zukan

WE WANT SOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

Eclecticism and melody combine on remastered version of YMO star's fourth LP.

Issued a year after he co-starred with David Bowie in 1983's Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence, Sakamoto resisted the temptation to cash in. While *Ongaku Zukan* came front-end loaded with accessible moments – Etude's almost Herbie Hancock playfulness, Tibetan Dance's jazz-funky orchestral lounge, something he could turn out in his sleep – the rest shifted the dial away from his past in computer-poppers Yellow Magic Orchestra. While Sakamoto used a Fairlight to enhance Mori No Hito's longing slow drama and Self Portrait's layered reflections, his new toy is at the fore on M.A.Y. In The Backyard, all metallic howls and harsh jabs in counterpoint to elegant piano. A bonus single, featuring Ma Mère l'Oye's cool meld of *musique concrète* and children's choirs plus Replica's spooked sci-fi, imitates the original Japanese release.

Andy Cowan

Heart and soul: The Rev-Lons with (right) producer Gary Paxton, 1962.

Various

★★★★

Hearts For Sale! Girl Group Sounds USA 1961-1967

ACE. LP

Fifth volume in Ace's superlative series of vinyl comps celebrating the US girl group sound.

ONE OF the strongest cuts, also the earliest here, is The Del-Phis' My Heart Tells Me So (AKA I Know It's You) from 1961. Raw soul straight out of the Motor City, written by a pre-Motown Martha Reeves, and built around her infectious vocal, all raspy and agitated, it ranks alongside anything coming out of Hitsville USA that year. Equally lively is Bonnie Jean's Street Dance, an explosive R&B blast from 1964 featuring the Wrecking Crew, Darlene Love & The Blossoms and a screaming, honking sax not unlike Jr Walker's. The pace slows with album cover stars The Lovettes' Lonely Girl from 1966, a late-night teary ballad perfect for a noir soundtrack, but it's back to a gallop with the 1963 turbulent title track by The Fran-Cettes.

Lois Wilson

David Westlake

★★★★

D87

OPTIC NERVE. CD/DL/LP

Lit-pop: his part in its downfall – Servant's solo debut expands.

"A real egomaniac," according to Lawrence from Felt, David Westlake felt that his brief period on the Creation Records roster ended because "I wasn't pretending to be in the MC5." This upgrade of his self-titled 1987 solo mini-LP for Alan McGee's label shows that Westlake's true allies came from further afield than Detroit. He and future Auteur Luke Haines are backed by The Triffids' rhythm section on the studio tracks, while three Go-Betweens help on the 1987 BBC session included as a bonus, along with two further solo demos. There are shades of Orange Juice on the jingly Talk Like That, but the urgent, bookish The Word Around Town was the Middlesex symbol's signature tune at this stage and was set to be the original LP's title track until Westlake clocked the unfortunate initials. A footnote, but one with a certain sense of style.

Jim Wirth

Pere Ubu

★★★★

Architecture Of Language 1979-1982

FIRE. CD

Hüsker 'bu? Forbidding Ohioans Day-Glo years.

"Can't we be happy like the tiny mice?" squeaked David Thomas on Pere Ubu's antagonistically twee 1981 single Not Happy, the band forged from the heart of Cleveland darkness determined to confound in their turn-of-the-1980s incarnation. Previously available on vinyl only, Fire's first two boxed sets of the US art-rockers complete *oeuvre* are coming to CD; the first, *Elitism For The People 1975-1978* contains five-star epics *The Modern Dance* and *Dub Housing*, but this second volume offers even more difficult fun. Released by Chrysalis in 1979, *New Picnic Time* is among the most aggressively odd records to be put out on a major label; mad tweety noises on A Small Dark Cloud, Talking Heads hellscape on Small Was Fast. The tiny mice then took full control for *The Art Of Walking* (1980) and *Song Of The Bailing Man* (1982), which share a similar acid-bright Picasso aesthetic, but sinewy method always underpins the madness.

Jim Wirth

Richard Wright

★★★

Wet Dream

PARLOPHONE. CD/DL/LP

Gentle Pink Floyd keyboardist's gentle solo debut.

Richard Wright, who would have turned 80 in July, was always more team player than solo act. 1978's unfortunately titled, self-written (other than then-wife Juliette's lyrical contribution to Pink's Song), self-produced, *Wet Dream* was the first of his two solo albums. Recorded on the French Mediterranean, suggestions of it being laid-back were only enhanced by several songs eulogising Wright's holiday home in Greece where the album was written. Pink Floyd touring guitarist Snowy White guested, King Crimson saxophonist Mel Collins – fresh from The Rolling Stones' Miss You – puts in a terrific turn on the single Cat Cruise, but a mostly instrumental album drifted by almost unnoticed. All these years later, the original cover has been pointlessly jettisoned, while a Steven Wilson remix adds expertly-separated clarity to Mediterranean C and a little more punch generally, particularly to the sax-based Waves.

John Aizlewood

Clydie King

★★★★

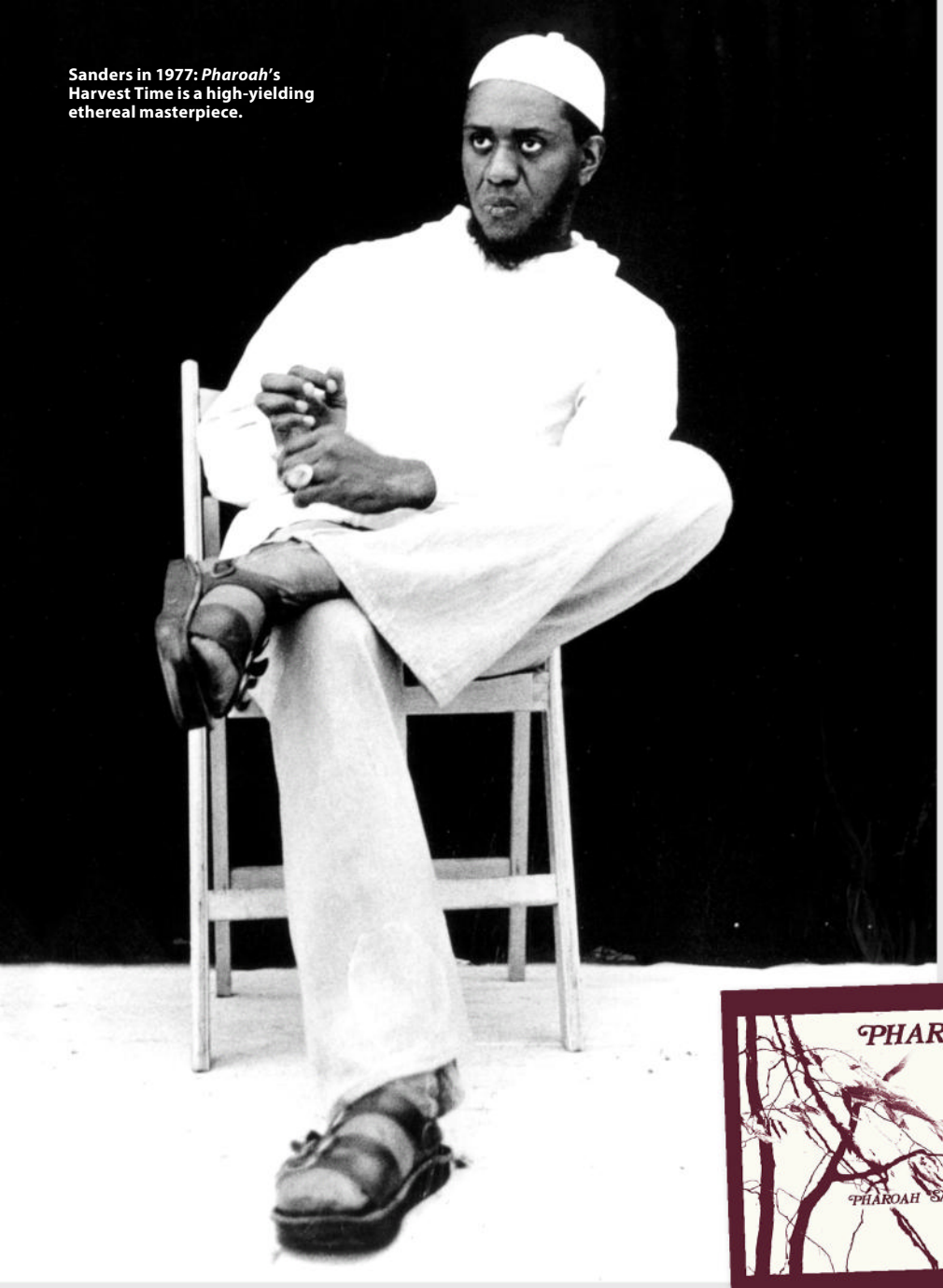
Direct Me

FLOATING WORLD. CD

1970 debut album from the legendary back-up singer.

As one-third of R&B trio The Blackberries, Clydie King's soulful harmonising lit up recordings by Humble Pie, The Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan, the latter calling her his "ultimate singing partner". King, though, had an equally impressive lead voice, borne out on her 1970 debut solo album. Recorded with Gabriel Mekler (he'd just produced Janis Joplin and was soon to work with Etta James) and a crack band featuring King's childhood pal Billy Preston on organ, its 10 tracks highlight King's chameleonic vocal skills – raw and urgent on Otis Redding's Direct Me; sassy and silky on Gladys Knight's You Need Love Like I Do, Don't You; back to church on Delaney & Bonnie's Long Road Ahead; gloriously sweet and syrupy on Robert West's 'Bout Love. Issued on Mekler's Lizard label with little promotion, it flopped, but its rediscovery is most welcome.

Lois Wilson



Sanders in 1977: *Pharoah's* Harvest Time is a high-yielding ethereal masterpiece.

Cream of the crop

The saxophone master's serene 1977 masterpiece, finally available again. By John Mulvey.

Pharoah Sanders

★★★★★

Pharoah

LUAKA BOP. CD/DL/LP

PERHAPS YOU KNOW the feeling. There's a record you really need, but the original pressings are scarce, to say the least, and normally sell for a few hundred pounds. One day, you learn that a reissue has finally surfaced, albeit on a label you've never heard of before. You buy it, the pressing's OK, and you add it to your collection. But then, a while later, you discover you've bought a nicely presented bootleg: an official version remains frustratingly out of reach; the collection incomplete.

The last time this writer got caught out was with a copy of Pharoah Sanders' 1977 album, *Pharoah*. Over the past few years, the market for Sanders' music has become more intense, thanks to the vogue for spiritual jazz – a questing imperative and loosely Eastern musical augmentation, playing that vacillates between the meditative and epiphanic – and his feted 2021 album with Floating Points, *Promises*. *Pharoah*, though, has remained legally elusive, until the welcome arrival of this remastered and expanded version from Luaka Bop.

In that time, it's also been raised to something of a sacred artefact even in the Sanders canon. For those who came to his music via the ambient manoeuvres of *Promises*, it's a logical next step. Side one's Harvest Time (the album is often erroneously referred to as 'Harvest Time') takes 20 and a half minutes to work its way through myriad delicate variations on a two-chord vamp. There's a restrained guitar groove from Tisziji Muñoz, weaving in and out of Steve Neil's equally understated bass line. Organ comes from Clifton 'Jiggs' Chase, who'd go on to produce and co-write Grandmaster Flash's The Message. Harmonium shade is provided by Sanders' then wife, Bedria, apparently encountering the instrument for the first time. No drums. And Sanders himself, conjuring phrases out of his tenor as subtle as breaths, privileging his most sensuous playing rather than his fearsome capacity for skronk.

The whole feels lighter than air. In 2021, Floating Points' Sam Shepherd told MOJO about his own experience in the studio with Sanders. "I feel there's a pressure within those environments to get stuff done," he said. "Whereas with Pharoah it feels the opposite. There's no rush. There's a peace to it. And he listens and listens and listens… then plays it just the once. And it bangs!" That's what Harvest Time sounds like, too: an ethereal masterpiece, created when its maker was ready, spontaneously, and intuitively.

Sanders, though, was less positive about the recording, perhaps compromised by the tricky relationship he had with the original label, India Navigation. It sits at an interstitial point in his career: three years after his seismic run of Impulse! albums had come to an end; mere months before his career would take a radical commercial turn with the slick soul-jazz of *Love Will Find A Way*.

Love Will Find A Way itself actually makes its first appearance on side two of *Pharoah*, pleasingly unpolished, with a Muñoz guitar solo that makes explicit the bandleader's original plan to make a rock record, and an ecstatic vocal from Sanders himself that works as a bridge back to his earlier collaborations with Leon Thomas like The Creator Has A Master Plan (from 1969's *Karma*). A third track, Memories Of Edith Johnson (Sanders' aunt) is stately, churchy, a benediction akin to Let Us Go Into The House Of The Lord (from 1970's *Deaf Dumb Blind/ Summun Bukmun Umyun*).

The Luaka Bop *Pharoah* doesn't end there, however. Two more versions of Harvest Time show how Sanders' improvised studio beatitude could solidify into a surprisingly resilient live highlight. The takes here come from a European tour in August 1977, backed by a more conventional line-up: Sun Ra Arkestra alumni Hayes Burnett on bass and Clifford Jarvis on drums; the unknown Khalid Moss on piano. With this incarnation, Harvest Time becomes less of an outlier in the Sanders catalogue, more part of a continuum. The driving 10-minute take from a jazz festival in Willisau, Switzerland harks back to Sanders' Impulse! years, with the saxophonist drifting into an astonishingly measured series of free ululations at the seven-minute mark. An 18-minute version from Antwerp, meanwhile, is generally funkier and smoother, signposting where Sanders' music was headed for the next few years.

Together, they provide that most valuable kind of bonus material: tracks that enrich our understanding of music we already know. They flesh out the story of how an album long consigned to marginalia – by neglect and by rarity – deserves a place front and centre among Pharoah Sanders' very finest records. It's time, finally, to reap what he sowed.

Ravi Shankar

★★★★

Shankar Family & Friends

DARK HORSE. CD/DL/LP

East meets West with Ravi Shankar and George Harrison.

Originally released in 1974, this collaboration between sitar master Shankar and Beatle George is one of the earliest world music albums, blending Indian classical, pop and jazz. Composed by the former, and produced by "Hari Georgeson", joining many respected Indian musicians are Billy Preston, Nicky Hopkins, Klaus Voormann, Jim Keltner, Ringo and others. The first half is comprised of instrumentals and songs, including I Am Missing You, Ravi's first pop composition. A love song to Hindu god Krishna and sung by sister-in-law Lakshmi Shankar, it's blessed with a catchy melody and mellifluous flute by jazzman Tom Scott. The second half is the score for a never-staged ballet that follows transcendence through struggle in the language of music, with a chanting choir that projects humanity's universality, clearly the album's aim all along.

Michael Simmons

75 Dollar Bill

★★★★

Power Failures

KARL. DL/LP

The experts of small ideas, forever expanding, reveal the drawing board.

As the guitar-and-percussion duo 75 Dollar Bill, Rick Brown and Che Chen don't just play grooves, defining and then driving into the rhythm like an engine's piston; they use the groove to build the whole uncanny automobile. Sometimes, it's the two of them, repeating melody and metre until their minimalism alone becomes propulsion; other times, casts of horns and strings push them toward entirely unexpected moulds. These smartly assembled seven tracks, pressed to vinyl after first serving as a pandemic-era Bandcamp boon, feel like sketches and notes passed between the ingenious original designers, little notions they never got around to trying elsewhere. Yo La Tengo's Ira Kaplan plunks and screeches between the beats of 15, while the Buchla of Yasi Perera inside a different version of the same structure suggests a ball bouncing during a dream. Best of all, though? The dual architects themselves, riffing and winding for 20 minutes of trance-inducing transcendence to end it.

Grayson Haver Currin

Galt MacDermot

★★★★

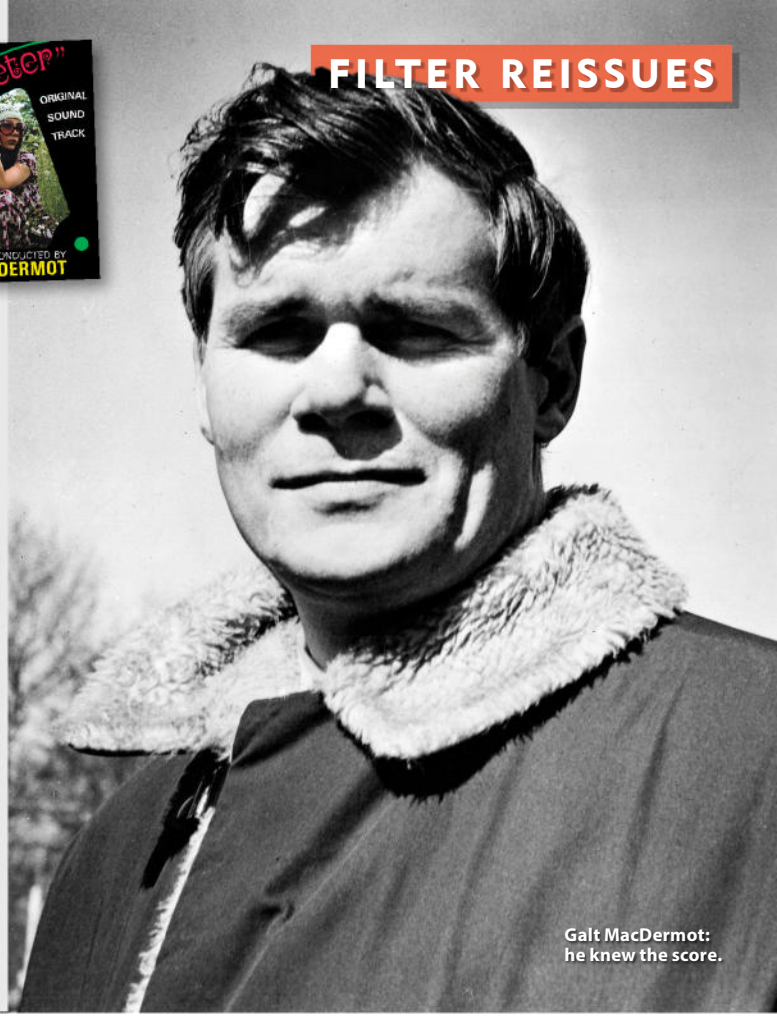
Woman Is Sweeter

NOW-AGAIN. DL/LP

Gorgeous reissue of 1969 soundtrack from the composer of Hair.

WITH THE primacy afforded him from writing the music to Hair, Montreal composer and pianist Galt MacDermot set up Kilmarnock Records and assembled a crack house band including drummers Idris Muhammad and Bernard Purdie to put down this 1969 score to a documentary on Yves Saint Laurent. Sought after primarily for sampling purposes – most lucratively for Busta Rhymes, who used the heavy funk bass line from Space on 1996's Woo-Hah!! Got You All In Check – it's nevertheless worthy in its own right. The high point Tango is a rare groove, all snappy percussion, guitar flicks and piano clinks, which could be tailor-made for the blaxploitation market; MacDermot's next LP would indeed be the score to 1970's Cotton Comes To Harlem. The country soul-flecked title track, voiced by folk singer Fergus MacRoy (he just happened to be passing and they roped him in), is also special.

Lois Wilson



Galt MacDermot: he knew the score.

The Last Peach

★★★

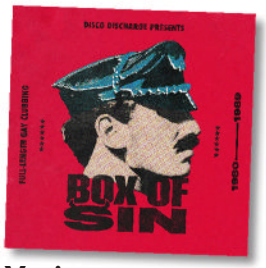
1990-1993

MELODIC. DL

Long-lost Manc indie band's second incarnation.

Melody Maker marked The Last Peach as a tip for 1992 alongside Pulp and Suede, but the Manchester group never even released an album due to singer/guitarist David Cooper's growing penchant for dance music alienating his three bandmates. When recording these tracks –unreleased apart from 12-inch singles Jarvis and String-Like – they were the antithesis of Madchester, sourcing instead The Smiths' sumptuous jangle (shades of Pete Shelley in Cooper's voice too), whilst Jarvis (the surname of Cooper's girlfriend, so unrelated to Pulp) aped Barbarism Begins At Home's funky bass-laden outro. Still, Cooper's claim in Unoriginal ("I have plagiarised to create my life") does them a disservice, given its gorgeous wan melody. Likewise Golden Showers' shades of Orange Juice's Motown years. More Manc connectivity: a joyous cover of Joni's Big Yellow Taxi that morphs into New Order's Ceremony, which would have slayed on the indie disco dancefloor had it been given the chance.

Martin Aston



Various

★★★★

Disco Discharge: Box Of Sin

DEMON. CD/LP

5-CDs/4-LPs of mid-to-late-'80s gay club music.

This is a lot of fun. Designed as music for dancing, communality and sex, the genre usually known as high energy is body music, built around an evolving mix of cutting-edge technology, relentless umda umda bass lines, electronica, show tunes, and classic disco. This is disco's revenge and is more subtle than the cliché would admit: although an accompaniment for up-drugs, there are lyrical shadows – the "pleasure and pain" of Hazell Dean's They Say It's Gonna Rain. Stompers abound in this wide-ranging compilation which includes all the usual suspects – Dean, Evelyn Thomas, Ian Levine etc – along with big names like Dusty Springfield, Whitney Houston and Donna Summer. Gay politics appears with Bronski Beat (Why?) and Boy George (No Clause 28), and the final disc carries the story forward to the early house boom of the later 1980s, with personal favourites like Raze (Break 4 Love) and S'Express (Theme From S'Express). A perfect accompaniment to dancing through adversity.

Jon Savage

The Maytones

★★★★

Creation Time

JAMAICAN ART. LP

Extended mixes of roots harmony duo's peak-period singles.

Hailing from the market town of May Pen in central Jamaica, The Maytones infused their work with the relaxed phrasing and vernacular of the countryside. Championed by local producer Alvin Ranglin, the duo reached their stride in the mid 1970s with the albums *Madness* and *Boat To Zion*, and this heavyweight vinyl compilation gathers five extended singles of the era, taken from the original master tapes, the superior audio quality allowing the listener to better appreciate the artistry of the backing musicians as well as the group's mellow harmonies. Outstanding hit Money Worries here has a lengthy dub section, and the likeable rendition of Delroy Wilson's Rain From The Skies has a tough toast from Prince Far I; repatriation call Africa We Want To Go has a mournful quality and piercing horns, while the title track implores the citizenry to improve Jamaica.

David Katz

Everyone Asked About You

★★★

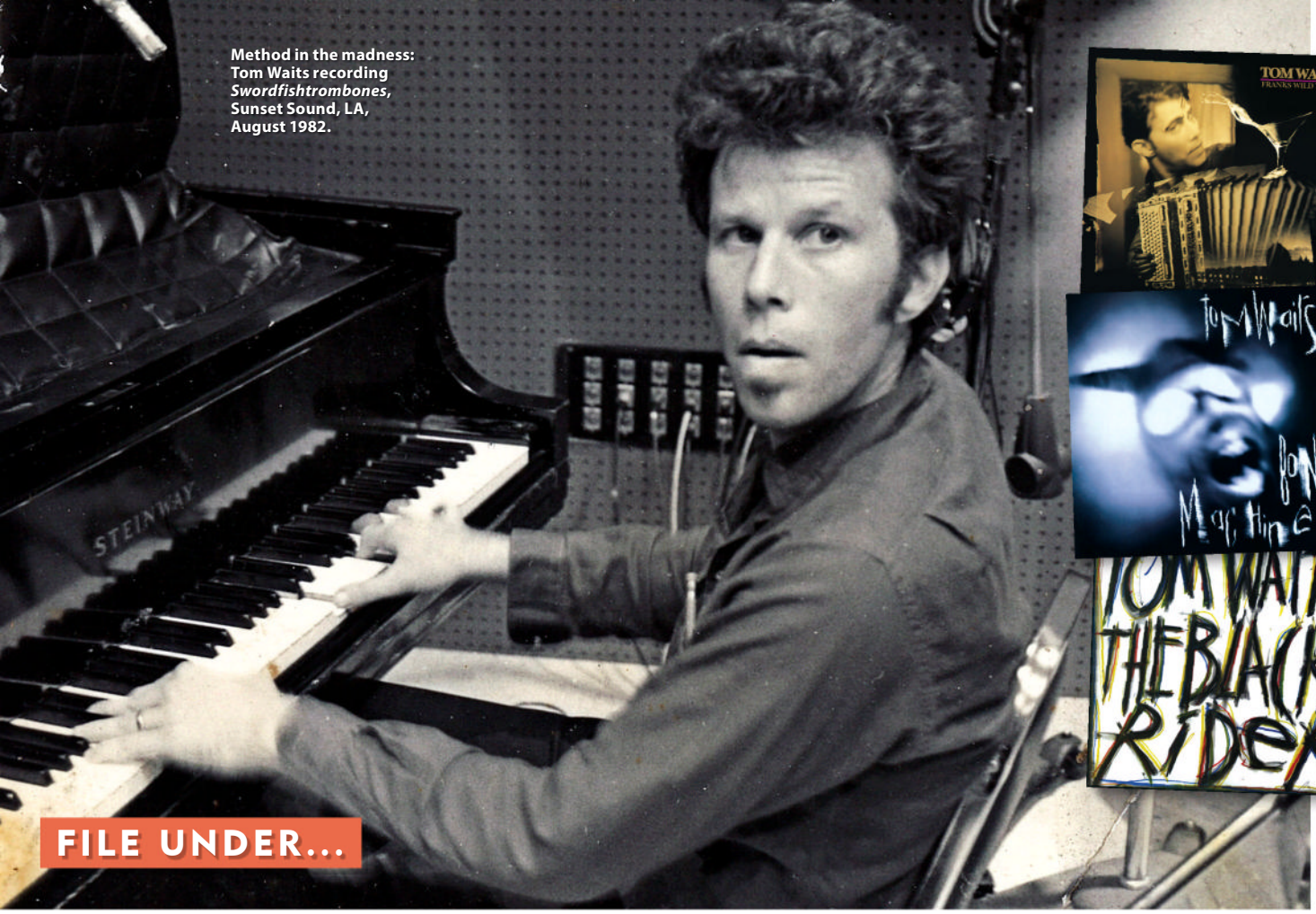
Paper Airplanes, Paper Hearts

NUMERO GROUP. DL/LP/MC

Meet Little Rock, Arkansas' premier exponents of "tweemo".

US music magazine Radar's 2007 feature Meet The Tweemos described an apparent scene where bands fused the abrasion of emo's angsty punk to the equally confessional, but more earnestly soppy, indie-pop known as twee. Not a crowded field, to be honest, with Everyone Asked About You considered The Ones That Got Away, with only two singles and one album (*Let's Be Enemies*) between 1997 and 2000, all compiled here. There's vivid evidence in the way Chris Sheppard and Collins Kilgore's guitars crash, burn and occasionally simmer; likewise the parallel passion of their twin singers – Hannah Vogan the (bitter)sweet to Sheppard's sour – dialling down the tweeness in A Better Way To A Broken Heart and It's Days Like This That Make Me Wish Summer Lasted Forever. With EAAY newly reunited after 23 years apart, it's time to let a new generation in on the secret.

Martin Aston



Method in the madness: Tom Waits recording *Swordfishtrombones*, Sunset Sound, LA, August 1982.

FILE UNDER...

Tom's wild years

The transition from motel Sinatra to Brechtian carny did wonders for Waits. By Jim Irvin.

TOM WAITS may be our greatest method singer. Raised in a nice middle-class San Diego home, almost all he hung onto of his background was his name, as he rose to prominence by living the life of his protagonists, troubled edge-dwellers subsisting on hard liquor in LA. He'd seemingly ruined his voice with booze by 26, all the better to resemble the grizzled souls he conjured on 1975's live-in-the-studio *Nighthawks At The Diner*. Even the live recording was a put-on, you'll notice. Adopting a persona in popular music is not unusual ("Paging Mr Zimmerman!"), indeed it's almost essential for survival, but Waits went for it to such a degree that survival didn't appear to be his motive.

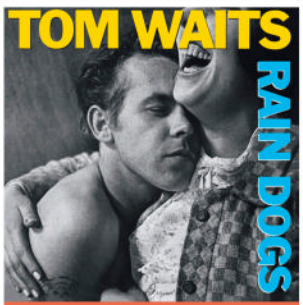
When he met his wife Kathleen Brennan, at the end of the '70s, on the set of One From The Heart, for which he was supplying the score, she shooed him out of the Tropicana motel and onto a less constricting crooked mile. Under her influence, he became not so much a living sculpture as a singing thrift-store proprietor fronting a junkyard outfit of flabby drums, wheezing bellows and pawn-shop marimbas: "Everything's a dollar in this box," as he sang tenderly on Soldier's Things, a highlight of *Swordfishtrombones* ★★★★★ (Island/UMG), his 1983 debut for Island Records, a masterpiece of re-invention. "Kathleen," said Waits, "was the person who convinced me that you can take James White & The Blacks and Elmer Bernstein and Leadbelly – folks that could never be on the bill together – and that they could be on the bill together in you. You take your dad's army uniform and your mom's Easter hat and your brother's motorcycle and your sister's purse and stitch them all together and try to make something meaningful out of it."

The bruised sentimentality remained, in places, but now the sound was telling a different story, his self-production drier, the players more often in the foreground, every song given its own set design. Though recorded at Sunset Sound in Hollywood, it felt like it could have been cut in an auto-shop garage with the mechanics still hard at work, somewhere that superimposed New Orleans over Berlin. Add in Salvation Army bands, harmonium solos, funky '60s Howlin' Wolf, some short stories and some tearjerkers and the new Waits – 15 songs in 40 minutes – was a steampunk parade of frights and delights.

To mark that album's 40th anniversary, all his Island studio albums have been excellently remastered for streaming, vinyl and CD. 1985's *Rain Dogs* ★★★★★ expanded on its predecessor, with Brennan receiving writing and production credits among the samba sea shanties, clown-car polkas, drunken tangos, waltzes in a xylophone mine and Midtown's crazed Elmer Bernstein-style big-band squall. Plus, a copper-bottomed hit, the couple's co-write, Downtown Train.

1987's *Franks Wild Years* ★★★ was a more challenging hour. The stunt delivery of songs like I'll Be Gone or I'll Take New York testing his listeners' mettle. His acting unashamedly daring, he'd gone *Trout Mask* Off-Broadway. Some original fans had surely left the ride by now, but also here was the song subsequently used as the theme for The Wire, Way Down In The Hole, which would reach a new audience.

1992's *Bone Machine* ★★★★ was more uncompromising still. Earth Died Screaming is delivered by a corpse. Let Me Get Up On It is incomprehensible, a drunken scarecrow lurching to life. But by now Waits made sense to grunge and Nine Inch Nails fans. 1993's *The Black Rider* ★★ was overtly theatrical, gothic horror written for a stage show by director Robert Wilson. Waits described his experience on this show as life-changing. He certainly took the mindset as far as he could. That star rating simply means it's not for non-believers; on its own terms it's extraordinary. And that's Waits in a nutshell.



"*Swordfish*... was a steampunk parade of frights and delights."

The Replacements

★★★★★

Tim: Let It Bleed Edition

RHINO. CD/DL/LP

Just shy of its 40th birthday, *Tim* has never seemed so beautiful.

IS THIS THE most purely likeable The 'Mats have ever been? After the band's spate of anthologies, reissues and reunion runs, the classically built but sonically scarred major label debut of Minneapolis's romantic miscreants gets its due not only with bonus material but with a remix that reinvents it. Ed Stasium dug deeply into multi-track tapes, stunned to discover the crisp sounds his old pal Tommy Ramone had gotten during the sessions despite his infamously muddy mix. Stasium's work puts a spotlight beneath these 11 songs, brightening hidden corners until Bastards Of Young, Left Of The Dial and Kiss On The Bus sparkle like unworn jewels. There's an unrehearsed but breathtaking Can't Hardly Wait with only cello and acoustic, a scabrous Bus demo, a thrill ride of a joyous 1986 Chicago marathon set, and MOJO writer Bob Mehr's candid and studied linernotes. A remastered take on the original mix is wholly unnecessary, but at least it highlights how much *Tim* beams with this overdue makeover.

Grayson Haver Currin

Across the multi-tracks: The Replacements (clockwise from left) Tommy Stinson, Chris Mars, Bob Stinson and Paul Westerberg get reinvented.

Various

★★★

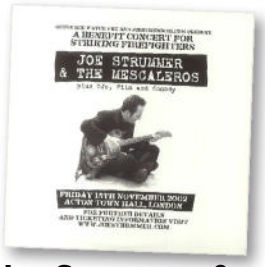
Produced By Tony Visconti

EDSEL. CD/DL/LP

Four CDs – or six LPs – tracing the six-decade career of the producer who helmed glam rock and more.

Best known for his associations with Marc Bolan/T. Rex and David Bowie, Tony Visconti's gift as producer/arranger has been his knack for translating band performances into great and enduring records (sometimes becoming an additional member in the process). His versatility is probably best exemplified by his work with Bowie (the expansive 2019 mix of 1969's Memory Of A Free Festival highlighting its timelessness) and the fact that he's overseen key records by everyone from The Strawbs to The Seahorses. Some inclusions are skippable – Electric Angels' 1990 hair rocker Rattlesnake Kisses; the folky musical theatre of Blessing In Disguise by Annie Haslam's Renaissance – but a compilation that finds room for Hazel O'Connor's Will You?, Haysi Fantayzee's John Wayne Is Big Leggy and Thin Lizzy's Dancing In The Moonlight ultimately comes across like some strange and brilliant jukebox.

Tom Doyle



Joe Strummer & The Mescaleros

★★★★

Live At Acton Town Hall

DARK HORSE. CD/DL/LP

An official release for Joe's benefit show for the Fire Brigades Union.

The question might be: why didn't it happen sooner? On November 15, 2002, Mick Jones joined his old compadre Joe Strummer on-stage for a three-song encore of Clash tunes: unscripted, it was the first time they'd performed together since Jones had been sacked 19 years earlier. Cosmic forces seemed to be at work, as Strummer would tragically die just six weeks later, a Clash reunion brewing. That Jones appears on this recording lends it ineffable historical heft – and clues to his impromptu plugging-in might be divined in Strummer's shout-out to Mick and his newborn daughter Stella earlier in the show – but what's also inescapable is the power of the music itself. Well-drilled, young, hungry, the multi-instrumentalist Mescaleros are in full attack on the fusionist Bhindee Bhagee and funky Cool'N'Out, and though their widescreen Clash arrangements might challenge diehards, Strummer's clearly in his element. And, at the finale, Jones too…

Pat Gilbert

Deborah Feingold

The Black Dog

★★★★

Spanners

WARP. LP

Sheffielders' fizzing third album remains electronica landmark.

Electronic music has conquered the world since The Black Dog released their third album for Warp in 1995. Yet it's a testimony to the craft and brio of the three original members – Ken Downie, Ed Handley and Andy Turner – that it remains such a resonant piece nearly 30 years on. Formed in Sheffield in the l ate 1980s, The Black Dog's intricate techno, ghostly ambient and sharp-elbowed breakbeat seemed predestined to lead to an alliance with their fabled hometown label. *Spanners* remains as vivacious ever, largely due to The Black Dog's decision to spread their net wide for inspiration, seen in the spritely, acid-washed Latin rhythms of Barbola Work and the epic Psil-cosyin, which lurches and pivots around north African beats, on to a crescendo of near-devotional intensity. Handley and Turner soon left to form Plaid. Downie still releases music today. But *Spanners* remains a landmark in not just The Black Dog's canon, but electronic music too.

Stephen Worthy

Grateful Dead

★★★★

Wake Of The Flood

RHINO. CD/DL/LP

Underrated 1973 set, plus extras, from the inexhaustible Jerry and co.

Casual explorers of the Dead's studio output tend to stop at 1970's *American Beauty*, but there's plenty more in that forbidding catalogue to treasure. Not least *American Beauty*'s belated follow-up, here receiving the obligatory 50th anniversary remaster and expansion. Typically, some great songs – notably jazz-optimised workout Eyes Of The World – sound a little tame compared with myriad exceptional live versions. But a 12-minute Weather Report Suite finds the band leaning into the baroque possibilities of the studio; think of it as their Heroes & Villains. Among the live bonus tracks, you can hear how skilfully the Dead developed Weather Report Suite's intricacies on-stage; further evidence, after this year's *Here Comes Sunshine* box set, of the band's superb gigging form in '73. Plus a couple of real revelations: Jerry Garcia home demos of Eyes Of The World and Here Comes Sunshine, where the jewel-like songs at the heart of the jams are exposed, with spectral guitar and keyboard accompaniment.

John Mulvey

Danger Mouse & Jemini

★★★★

Born Again

LEX. CD/DL/LP

Playful beats and effusive flows lace hip-hop odd couple's long-shelved second LP.

A year before 2004 mash-up *The Grey Album* led him into Gorillaz orbit, Danger Mouse's ahead-of-the-curve production skills were writ large across *Ghetto Pop Life*, an electric partnership with Brooklyn rapper Jemini. As *Born Again* zips along in a feelgood frenzy you'll query why its sequel got nixed, Jemini's effusive hooks and effortless flow lighting up the psychedelic organs, soulful horns, wah wah guitars and banging boom bap beats of Locked Up, Walk The Walk and the standout title track. While a few rhymes fall flat – the clichéd Dear Poppa, the by-numbers Where You From – it ends on an energetic high, Jemini urging listeners to "Feel the rush/Feel the ride" on World Music, a big-screen precursor of Danger Mouse's hit turn with Gnarls Barkley.

Andy Cowan

The Doors

★★★★

Live At The Matrix 1967: The Original Masters

RHINO. CD/DL/LP

The Doors on the cusp of rock stardom.

Too much Doors history focuses on tawdry tales and Jim Morrison's habits (admittedly one and the same), while their artistry gets overlooked. These 37 songs were recorded at San Francisco club The Matrix two months after the release of their debut LP and before Light My Fire became a huge hit. On an instrumental version of Gershwin's Summertime, organist Ray Manzarek, guitarist Robby Krieger and drummer John Densmore display their mastery of jazz chops. And Morrison throughout was a moody, rhapsodic lyricist and powerful crooner combining Sinatra and the blues. Their covers of Miles Davis's All Blues, Milt Jackson's Bag's Groove and Brecht & Weill's Alabama Song, or originals like The End, show a sophistication unmatched by most '60s rockers. It's fascinating to hear these ambitious young men as they force rock to grow up.

Michael Simmons

Weather report: Ken Kusudo (left) and Jeff Worth at UC Riverside, April 19, 1969.

A passing shower

Acid-folk Cali dreamers who went from high school to nudist camps.

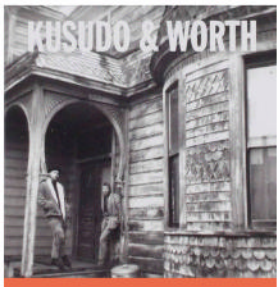
Kusudo & Worth
Of Sun And Rain

SELF-RELEASED, 1969

IT WAS all going swimmingly for folk-rock schoolboy prodigies Ken Kusudo and Jeff Worth, a kind of Riverside, California Simon & Garfunkel. In 1968 they'd graduated from high school and church events to proper auditoriums. A year later, they'd captured their translucent harmonies and phantasmagorical lyrics on a debut album, *Of Sun And Rain*, albeit one they'd had to nail in just three hours, on a minuscule budget of $300.

The first seed of doubt was planted by their manager, the son of Bobby Darin's tour manager. "This guy, who was our age – he thought we could be his doorway to management," says Kusudo. "He asked us to spend the night at his place… and then if we'd join him at a nudist camp. He was unnerving, just like his friends. He did get us an audition with [TV producer and DJ] Wink Martindale, who said we were depressing, and nothing of ours would sell. It painted a bad picture of what the music business might be like."

The episode proved a rude awakening for a duo whose music was formulated in innocence. Kusudo and Worth first met on the school bus in 1960, becoming a duo four years later when Kusudo played his very first song, Elizabeth, to his friend. "The lyrics were typical adolescent angst," Kusudo recalls. "But Jeff decided we should be Kusudo & Worth." "I wanted to be a participant, not just a listener," says Worth. "Ken was more advanced, musically and vocally, but he still said yes."



"I love rock'n'roll; I just wasn't very rock'n'roll."
JEFF WORTH

Kusudo's sister had taken him to see Peter Paul And Mary when he was only 12. "The way their guitars combined, one playing high and the other low, and their voices so tight, blew me away," he recalls. "I only wanted to be a folk singer after that." Soon he was attending gigs by Canned Heat, The Lovin' Spoonful, Country Joe & The Fish, Moby Grape, Blue Cheer and the key artists who would shape *Of Sun And Rain*: Simon & Garfunkel, and "the sound they generated with just voices and acoustic guitars", and Tim Buckley's "hardcore, driving sound, and the way he jammed with his band. One time I saw Tim, he got up on-stage and said, 'I've got 10 songs for you tonight; two for you and eight for me.'"

The duo's material advanced further after they met Richard Krieb, a physics and maths student with plans to work in aerospace engineering. "Ken said they were struggling with lyrics," says Krieb, "and I don't know what possessed me, as I had absolutely no experience, but I said I'd write for them."

Krieb was soon taking a leaf out of Donovan's book, "looking at the world with a childlike sense of wonder, but I dug into my serious, introspective side too. I was having so much fun, I dropped out of college."

Krieb started operating as Kusudo & Worth's booking agent, live soundman and adviser during *Of Sun And Rain*'s recording. They started with Elizabeth and the equally cherubic For You, before turning Buckley-esque, as intensely thrumming 12-string serenades like I Would Like To Hear Your Story came to the fore. Side two's similar trajectory started with Kusudo & Worth's first co-write, The Gull, and concluded with the title track ("chosen due to its overarching theme of all that life encompasses," Krieb explains), the tempo speeding up as Kusudo & Worth neared the studio budget's three-hour limit.

The pair's sun-dappled naivety, so critical to the charm of their album, was not as helpful when it came to marketing themselves. A little FM radio; a more prestigious gig at the local University Theatre alongside emerging comedian Steve Martin: these increments of exposure didn't help, before Worth had a change of heart. "I was married at 18, and had moved away to college," he says. "Maybe I once thought, Oh boy, I'll be a star someday. But really I wanted to be a family man. I love rock'n'roll; I just wasn't very rock'n'roll."

"I was happier for Jeff's marriage than disillusioned with Kusudo & Worth," says Kusudo. "I don't think we ever had any grand illusion about being the next Simon & Garfunkel. We were increasingly convinced that our real ambition and joy was simply to create music."

Kusudo didn't give up, exactly. He set aside plans to become a teacher for 15 years of playing (solo) covers in a local bar. He and Worth also began playing live again in 1972, but eschewed recording. Most weekends, the pair still meet to work out arrangements, but still, they take it no further.

In the meantime, the 200 copies of *Of Sun And Rain* became an acid-folk cult sensation, selling for up to $2,000 each; it was finally reissued in 2019. "It all worked out," Worth insists, with the modesty that has characterised their six-decade musical journey. "We made a record, and every so often, people are interested, which amazes me. I'm told this guy in Tennessee is covering our songs – that's enough for me."

Martin Aston

CREDITS

Tracks: Elizabeth/For You/Song To A Pelican/Love Is Naught/I Would Like To Hear Your Story/The Gull/Something From Nowhere/Bittersweet/Mill Valley Woodlands/Of Sun And Rain

Personnel: Ken Kusudo (vocals, guitar, harmonica), Jeff Worth (vocals, guitar)

Producer: self-produced

Released: 1969

Recorded: Custom Fidelity, Hollywood

Current availability: vinyl (Hanako, 2020) and CD (Slipstream, 2019) reissues

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SAT 16
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MOJO covermount CDs

Our finest compilations, picked by you!

THE FIRST CD that accompanied an issue of MOJO was, it's fair to say, something of a false start. MOJO 45, in the summer of 1997, came with a cover promising the 100 Greatest Singles Of All Time, and a CD packaged to look like a vintage 7-inch. Its contents were enigmatic but revealed themselves to be Good Vibrations – the Greatest Single Of All Time, according to MOJO's electorate – plus two more Beach Boys classics and a Brian Wilson interview. A lovely artefact, for sure, but scant indication of what was to come.

The second MOJO CD arrived three years later with MOJO 82 and looked a lot more like the compilations we've been assembling ever since. *Maximum 65* captured the fervid atmosphere of a Mod hangout in the mid '60s, juxtaposing ace faces – The Kinks, P.P. Arnold, a young Bowie, the Small Faces themselves – with a connoisseur's choice of obscure gems: Jump And Dance by The Carnaby!

It's the kind of mix we love, and a neat way of articulating what we try and do every month: celebrate the greats, uncover the lost treasures, champion the best new music, and bind them all together in such a way that makes compelling sense. From MOJO 128 in the summer of 2004 (a startlingly eclectic selection curated by the Red Hot Chili Peppers), our CDs have been monthly, and have accommodated soul, reggae, psych, blues, folk, funk, punk, post-punk, poetry, electronica, African music, glam, garage, prog and even the odd bit of straight-up rock. There have been long-running series – six volumes of *Heavy Nuggets* thus far, between 2007 and 2022 – and revelatory exclusives, like our recent tranche of unheard Stax demos.

On the occasion of our 30th birthday, then, please allow us a little self-indulgence, as we dig into the office crates and compile our Top 10 MOJO CDs. Thank you to everyone who has listened to these audio manifestations of the MOJO ethos, to everyone who contacted us and told us their favourites, and to Dave Henderson, who continues to lovingly compile them for us. Gotta keep those good vibrations happening…

"Every month we celebrate the greats, uncover the lost treasures, and champion the new."

Alamy

CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 MOJO CDs. Next month we want your Adrian Sherwood Top 10 (productions and remixes). Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Adrian Sherwood' and we'll print the best comments.

10 The Meaning Of Within

MOJO 348, NOVEMBER 2022

You say: "The way the Timothy Leary bit Lennon nicked for Tomorrow Never Knows segues into Shankar is seamless and makes me smile every time." Paul Kay, via Twitter

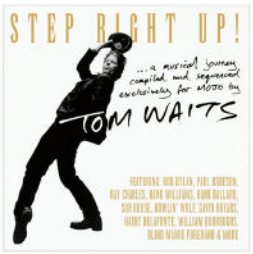
Recent MOJO CDs have delved into the esoteric influences on Kate Bush, Pink Floyd and The Velvet Underground, but none of them have gone quite as far out as this guide to the avant-garde tastes of The Beatles, and especially Paul McCartney, circa 1966. Psychedelic invocations, primitive electronics, Indian ragas, Buddhist rituals, free jazz and clangorous noise collages jostle for space with Nat King Cole's Unforgettable – the subject of Paul McCartney's first spliced and looped tape experiments. Not the easiest of listens, perhaps, but one that places the Fabs into a valuable new context: behind the familiar genius of *Revolver* lay true, radical intent. *JM*

4 Raw Soul

MOJO 124, MARCH 2004

You say: "This one blew my face off as a teenager and was always a good barometer of taste when I put it on at house parties." Bobby Lee, via Twitter

To some of us this compilation will always be known as 'Raw Sou' (check out that unfortunate typo on the CD spine… if only we had). Production faux pas aside, Volume 3 in the short-lived MOJO Music Guide series was designed as a collection of 15 unimpeachable, earthy tracks that you could play to your mates, with the deliberate deep cuts – sourced from the ever-inspirational Ace Records catalogue at the suggestion of both MOJO's doyen-of-the-dusty-groove Andrew Male, and First Minister Of Soul Geoff Brown – adding a timeless boastful currency. "What do you mean you've never heard Albert Washington's Hold Me Baby? It's a heavy, 1969 mind-blower!" And, yes, it really is… *PA*



9 Step Right Up!

MOJO 200, JULY 2010

You say: "The Tom Waits curated one. I played it so much the CD actually got damaged." Hey Bulldog, via Twitter

MOJO's cover star-curated CDs are a genre in themselves, and the artists picking the tracks really put their shoulders to the wheel – Robert Plant and Alison Krauss's *Sand Blasters* (MOJO 335) being a top-notch recent example. Guest-editing MOJO 200 with typical gusto, Waits designed a covermount that sounded like the inside of his brain – Hank Williams' sepulchral Ramblin' Man hitting an atavistic blue note sustained by The Prisonaires, Harry Belafonte, Gavin Bryars and more. And when Bob Dylan's record label couldn't clear the aching 1961 cut I Was Young When I Left Home in time, Waits put a personal call into Dylan's management and – hey presto – all impediments dissolved. *DE*

8 Blue Christmas

MOJO 134, JANUARY 2005

You say: "Got to be Blue Christmas, it gets an airing every Christmas Day – love it!" Mark Adams, via Twitter

While some American readers had to wait until the new year to hear this eccentric holiday comp, in many ways, January well suits its vibe of nostalgic melancholy. An annual office favourite, these 15 tracks come in many shades of blue. Some, like The Handsome Family's doleful singalong So Much Wine, The Flaming Lips' bleakly lovely A Change At Christmas and Rufus Wainwright's toy shop-pop lament Spotlight On Christmas, became modern seasonal staples. Meanwhile, a sprinkling of soul greats tie it all up in a bow: Marvin's Purple Snowflakes, The O Jays, Supremes, Charles Brown, The Staple Singers and James Brown's heartfelt – and yet faintly menacing – Let's Make Christmas Mean Something This Year. *JB*

7 Bob Dylan: 14 Hidden Gems From The Bootleg Series 1963-1997

MOJO 352, MARCH 2023

You say: "The free CD of Dylan 'bootleg' tracks is jam on both sides of the bread." B.P. Fallon, via Twitter

MOJO 308 featured Queen on the cover, but it was the CD sitting beside them that drew most reader plaudits – *A MOJO Anthology* of King Crimson rarities. It heralded a series of deep cut comps from our biggest stars: Neil Young, The Kinks, The Grateful Dead, Depeche Mode and this blockbuster from early 2023. *14 Hidden Gems* parsed 17 volumes of Dylan's *Bootleg Series* into one thrilling sampler, shining a light into some of the most feted Bob periods (*Highway 61* outtake Sitting On A Barbed Wire Fence) and the more neglected (a gorgeous alternative Emotionally Yours from the *Empire Burlesque* sessions). *JM*

6 Trojan Explosion

MOJO 105, AUGUST 2002

You say: "The best Trojan compilation ever was a MOJO giveaway: there's no better introduction to Jamaican music. Special mention to the all-black CD!" Popcasting, via Twitter

This mostly 1968-71 affair featured no-contest big hitters – 007, The Liquidator, Pressure Drop, Marley's Mr Brown – but it was the further 16 helpings from the Trojan catalogue that really pushed the button. Bracing in its early reggae/pre-dread/do-what-thou-wilt variety, with dancing and novelty leavening tribulation and more spiritual concerns. Highlights include Slim Smith's soulful Everybody Needs Love, Drumbago & The Dynamites' penny whistle chugger Dulcemania and The Crystalites' lunatic gunslinger Undertaker's Burial, but there's not a wasted track here. Let's not forget MOJO's similarly tight March 2005 CD, *Studio One Selector*. *IH*

5 Harvest Revisited

MOJO 207, FEBRUARY 2011

You say: "There's no chaff in this Harvest; just bucolic good vibes." Karen McDermott, via e-mail

This MOJO-curated take on Neil Young's 1972 classic came out top of our bespoke cover version CDs, just ahead of Nick Drake covers set *Green Leaves*. Both work by staying just close enough to the source to sound consistent without sacrificing individuality: as with Doug Paisley's gorgeously hang-dog Out On The Weekend, Kelley Stoltz's lightly effects-fried title track and the way Smoke Fairies turn up the unease of Alabama. Phosphorescent's rollicking Are You Ready For The Country? is still impossible to find anywhere else. The latter's Matthew Houck also appears on July 2016's *Blonde On Blonde Revisited*, a collectable MOJO vinyl edition along with *Let It Be Revisited* (October 2010) and April 2015's *Physical Graffiti Redrawn*. *JB*

3 Feed Your Head

MOJO 109, DECEMBER 2002

You say: "Pure quality throughout, perfect packaging and some revelatory selections." Birmingham 81, via Twitter

From the CD designed like a pill in a ziplock bag to the juxtaposition of Donovan with Dillinger, this drug-themed CD is testament to both compiler Andrew Male and art director Wag's staunch dedication to detail. In 2002, clearing tracks sometimes meant approaching the artist directly; Andrew remembers Sebadoh's Lou Barlow nonplussed at MOJO's request for 1994 track Too Pure, remembering it to be about the record label. Listening again, Lou decided it was, after all, about heroin. '16 Mind-Blowing Classics' peak with Funkadelic's 10-minute death trip Maggot Brain, before the freak-out finale: Harry The Hipster Gibson's Who Put The Benzedrine In Mrs Murphy's Ovaltine (H/T Fred Dellar). *JB*

2 The Score

MOJO 103, JUNE 2002

You say: "An exceptional compilation of soundtrack music, brilliantly curated. I still play this today. " Colin Leach, via Twitter

Accompanying the MOJO At The Movies issue which featured articles on The Great Rock N' Roll Swindle, The Monkees' Head, Curtis Mayfield's Superfly, and Sinatra's The Man With The Golden Arm, this compilation of stellar soundtrack cuts is, even though I say so myself, a beautifully sequenced CD. Johnny Pate's dramatic Blaxploitation groove Brother On The Run and the synthy grime-core of Wil Malone's Deathline were recent discoveries for me. Mixed with classics (Roy Budd's Get Carter), relatively new releases (Nick Cave's Let It Be) and a few wildcards (DJ Shadow's Dark Days), the result was intended as an amiable introduction to the myriad wonders of the film soundtrack. I hope it worked. *AM*

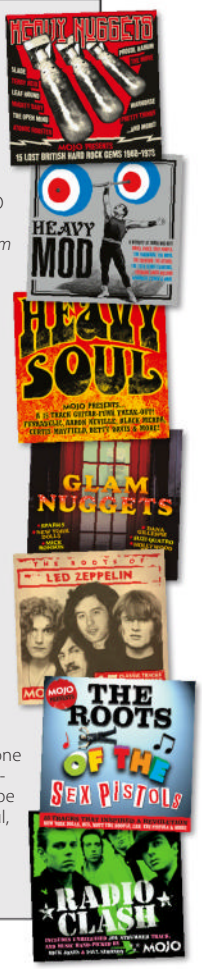
Instant Garage

MOJO 115, JUNE 2003

You say: "An emblem of what MOJO does best – exalt the canon (MC5, NY Dolls, Ramones) and point to the holes in it (The Artesians, Mouse And The Traps). Here's to another 30!" James Paasche, via Twitter

The idea with *Instant Garage* and the three other CDs in the MOJO Music Guide series was to mix the familiar with the obscure, for an immediate overview of a genre, in this case '60s garage rock. Compiled largely with the assistance of the ever-helpful Ace Records and the wonderful Miriam Linna and Billy Miller of Norton Records, these 28 tracks might be considered too much but it was a CD underscored by excess: too loud, too raw, too fast, too many. Personal highlights would include Brave New World's ultra-heavy fuzz punk cover of Train Kept A Rollin' and that segue from The Rats to Mouse And The Traps. It was all meticulously planned you know. *AM*

NOW DIG THIS



The concepts of 'Heavy' and 'Nuggets' have served us well over the years: besides the six gnarly, shaggy volumes of *Heavy Nuggets*, see also *Heavy Mod* (MOJO 182), *Heavy Soul* (198 and 317), *Glam Nuggets* (344) and *Punk Nuggets* (358). Multiple 'Roots Of' volumes have drilled down into the formative influences of our canonical cover stars: MOJO 129's blues and folk-rich *Roots Of Led Zeppelin* and 135's *Roots Of The Sex Pistols* are especially recommended. Dig out, too, MOJO 226's brutalist synth compendium *Electricity*, and 288's bracing survey of '70s kosmische *Neu! Decade*. Oh, and one last eclectic party-starter, in the shape of MOJO 131's soul, reggae and roots mash-up *Radio Clash*. Though we could go on…

Words: Phil Alexander, Jenny Bulley, Danny Eccleston, Ian Harrison, John Mulvey, Andrew Male.

Living the high life: there's a fatalism about Sly Stone's memoir.

Getty

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Stone had a baboon called Erfy – another grisly victim of Gun the pit bull. "And [Gun] didn't just kill him. He forced him to have sex after he was dead."
- On June 5, 1974, Stone and Kathy Silva married on-stage at Madison Square Garden, sandwiched between opener Eddie Kendricks and a headline set by Sly & The Family Stone. Unfortunately, the cleric turned out to be unregistered in New York, so they had to do it again in city hall.
- An appearance at a Grammy tribute in 2006 was preceded by a tragicomic pile-up of accidents. A motorbike crash nearly severed Stone's finger. Later, eating a bowl of Mexican food while walking, he fell off a cliff. But there was a silver lining: "Not a single bean had spilled."

Altitude sickness

The high times and crashing lows of psychedelic pioneer Sylvester Stewart. By Danny Eccleston.

Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin): A Memoir

★★★★

Sly Stone with Ben Greenman

WHITE RABBIT/AUWA BOOKS. £25

SETTING THE tone for what's to come, even the Prologue of this book is hair-raising. Sly Stone is talking about the first, second, third and fourth time he tried to quit crack cocaine. Hospitalised, barely able to walk or even breathe, he has been warned by doctors that, "If you go home and smoke again, you could die." Perhaps, you think, this event is in the middle-distance – maybe the '80s, when crack devastated America's R&B community, but no, this was 2019. The crack-gorging Sly Stone would have been 76 or 77.

Makes sense, though. If the word 'incorrigible' had a face, it might be Sly Stone's. In their peak years, 1967-71, Sly & The Family Stone, the band he led, conjured psychedelic R&B that matched the highs pursued by the era's narcotic adventurers with pure sonics, and appeared the manifestation of a multi-ethnic utopia. Their decline into schism, madness and withdrawal was all the sadder for their vast promise, and while that was not all Sly Stone's fault, it's fair to say that he didn't help much.

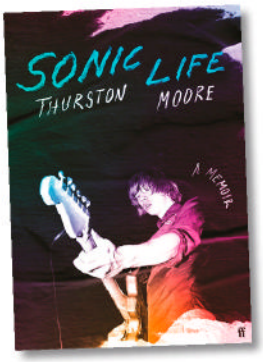
Because if Sly Stone loved music, he surely loved drugs more. As he notes of PCP – which was added to the menu shortly after Sly & The Family Stone's Woodstock apotheosis – "It threw your perspective off, which I liked. But it wasn't for everybody." Associates' claims that PCP turned Stone into a zombie are waved away without being directly rebutted. He says that the storytellers are "trying to set the record straight. But a record's not straight, especially when you're not." It's not the only point in his insanely colourful but inevitably rather depressing memoir where the facts of his life and career are made to seem nebulous, tractable.

> "If Sly Stone loved music, he surely loved drugs more."

Co-author Greenman has collaborated on books with Questlove, whose US imprint AUWA debuts with Thank You…, and co-wrote Stevie Van Zandt's recent Unrequited Infatuations. He is also the author of a 2009 novel about a Sly Stone-esque funk/rock star. His ear for Stone's creative vocabulary and amoral riffing is exquisite, but occasionally you see his working too clearly – where he's relied heavily on contemporary TV interviews, surviving live footage and Joel Selvin's 1998 oral history for ammunition, then poked Stone for a response. Of some of the most celebrated or notorious phases and incidents of his career, Stone appears to not remember much, or care to – but he doesn't mind admitting it. It's another, perhaps more honest kind of candour.

Still, there's ample corroboration of many of the more lurid legends. Stone's fearsome pit bull terrier, Gun, allowed to get away with most crimes, meets his maker after mauling Stone's son, Sylvester Jr. "I got out a rifle and pointed it at him to make him apologise," relates the singer. "But he didn't apologise. He made a noise that told me he was never going to be sorry." Later, given a platform to explain his bizarre appearance at Coachella in 2010, dressed in a blond wig and a policeman's hat, Stone still seems mildly outraged by the crowd's negative response to his rambling address about his then-current legal situation and wish to hear old songs in a recognisable form. Throughout, a supporting cast of crooks and lawyers, baboons and Panthers, plus a procession of ladyfriends, swirl psychedelically, giving the impression of a life never really in Stone's control. At one point he gifts a stolen Cadillac to Etta James – that doesn't end well – and there's a creepy cameo from Miles Davis, knocking on Stone's window late at night, with designs on the singer's fiancée, Kathy. "I laughed," writes Stone, "but didn't let him in."

It is said that Stone's health is failing. Hopefully, he will live to derive some benefit from this book, or the resurgence of interest it might prompt. But, historically, he has not made the most of these opportunities. Money has melted away, walked through the door or gone to the dealer, and there's a fatalism about Thank You… that suggests Stone knows it's too late for there to be a happy ever after. He wanted to go higher, and take us with him, but sooner or later, gravity gets us all.



Sonic Life: A Memoir

★★★★

Thurston Moore

FABER. £20

Sonic Youth co-leader's glorious punk/alt-rock geekfest.

Losing his father young, teenage Thurston shuttles insatiably from cosy Bethel, Connecticut to Lower Manhattan to witness NYC punk alongside his gay wingman Harold. The pair stumble upon the deviant Cramps and edge-of-violence Suicide at Max's Kansas City, and thus begins Moore's odyssey through the left-leaning musical landscape, related with compulsive in-the-room detail. After making his 'live debut' shouting "up yours!" into Poly Styrene's mike at CBGB's, he falteringly crosses the audience/stage divide, meeting visual artist Kim Gordon as a new band mate. Moore narrates their relationship with respect, their courtship "an existence of timelessness and wonder"; after marrying in 1984 (a self-designed Sonic Life tattoo instead of a ring), being a public golden couple eventually leads to claustrophobia, and in estrangement he ultimately finds love with publisher Eva Prinz. For its visceral inside-track reportage on Nirvana and countless others, Sonic Life will be every alt-rocker's binge-read this winter.

Andrew Perry

Shooting Star: The Definitive Story Of Elliott Smith

★★★★

Paul Rees

NINE EIGHT. £22

A new take on a harrowing tale.

Elliott Smith survived a dark childhood to craft a frequently brilliant canon as drink and drugs took hold (to the tune of what Smith claimed was $10,000 a day), before a murky, officially 'undetermined' death witnessed only by girlfriend Jennifer Chiba. Paul Rees's dilemma is that while, predictably, the Oscar-nominated Smith was a nightmare in altered states (self-absorbed, delusionally paranoid and so unconcerned with personal hygiene his nickname was 'Smelliott'), his chronic moodswings meant Smith wasn't especially likeable when sober. Wisely Rees finds heroes elsewhere, so there are no villains here beyond Smith's wicked stepfather – just loyal friends (particularly would-be saviour girlfriends), an indulgent label and collaborators, nearly all of whom Smith treated abominably and/or betrayed. The weirdest thing, beyond the absence of any reference to bipolar disorder, is how almost without exception they still revere him, even as they tell their horror stories.

John Aizlewood

Goth: A History

★★★

Lol Tolhurst

QUERCUS. £25

Founding member of The Cure surveys his dark terrain.

Like buses – or imaginary boys – books on goth apparently come in threes. Following John Robb's The Art Of Darkness and Cathi Unsworth's Season Of The Witch comes Lol Tolhurst's charmingly idiosyncratic history of the enduring subculture – "a way to understand the world," he writes. While The Cure's former drummer and keyboard player includes a wide-ranging overview of music and literature, his book is best when his own undead experience rises to the surface, whether that's touring with Siouxsie And The Banshees, having his mind blown by David Bowie and Sylvia Plath or bearing witness to the coffin-doored Batcave scene. Cure fans will enjoy his analysis of the band's "cold psychedelia" and their contested status – "the Schrödinger's cat of goth" – and his astute grasp of the solace offered by "miserable" art. "I know goth when I see it!" he says, describing a Godspeed You! Black Emperor gig. There's absolutely no doubt about that.

Victoria Segal

Scattershot: Life, Music, Elton And Me

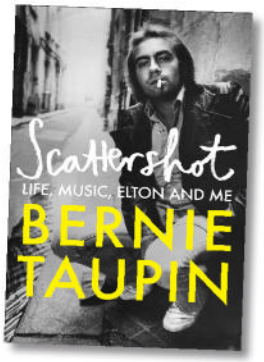
★★★★

Bernie Taupin

OCTOPUS. £25

The lyricist's tale: a life of songwriting and grand adventures.

"The cocoon of fame would kill me," notes Bernie Taupin,



underlining the fact that as Elton John's writing partner, particularly during their heady 1970s success, he enjoyed wealth and the rock'n'roll lifestyle without having to endure the claustrophobia of celebrity. Scattershot takes a non-linear approach – or at least doesn't feel the need to detail every key album and gig – and is all the better for it. It's funny too (one cokey chapter is titled The Days Of Wine And Noses), and encounters with the likes of Salvador Dalí and Princess Margaret colour the zippy narrative. Fresh revelations include the fact that the man who wrote Candle In The Wind was actually indifferent to Marilyn Monroe, and that he and John apologised to Cher for writing bitchy '76 B-side Snow Queen. There's a sense Taupin can't quite believe it all happened, as he marvels at his journey from Lincolnshire farm boy to bona fide Californian cowboy.

Tom Doyle

Anymore For Anymore: The Ronnie Lane Story

★★★

Caroline & David Stafford

OMNIBUS. £20

Portrait of a Face: the unsung creative.

Ronnie Lane went from East End urchin to stadium rocker in just six years (1965-71), co-writing hits for and playing bass with the Small Faces and Faces. While those bands' respective frontmen traded in bombast, he brought an understated beauty and warmth; just listen to his Song Of A Baker or Debris, both truly remarkable, levelling pieces. Satisfaction eluded him though, and in 1973, leaving the Faces, he went off-grid, recording his new group Slim Chance in a barn and touring as part of a travelling circus. Out of the public eye and amid nature, he appeared more at ease, reflected in the redemptive folk of songs such as How Come and The Poacher. But succumbing to multiple sclerosis, he was dead at just 51. His story is rarely told so this immensely readable survey is most welcome, mapping his turbulent, strange life via thorough research and interviews, although a flippant tone occasionally lets it down.

Lois Wilson

So It Started There: From Punk To Pulp

★★★

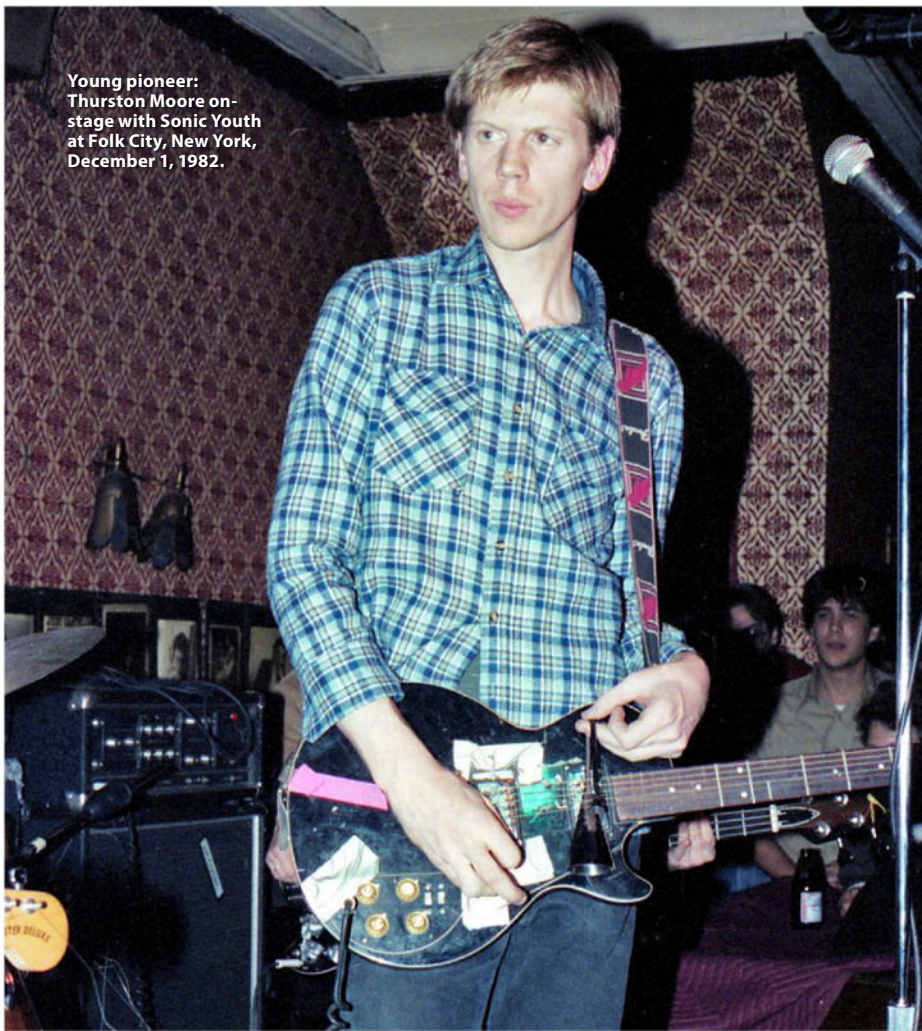
Nick Banks

OMNIBUS. £25

The road to Pulp, from the drummer's perspective.

Nick Banks's memoir begins backstage at Glastonbury 1995, in an "obscenely bright" fluorescent-lit Portakabin, as Pulp are about to seize the day as last-minute headliners after The Stone Roses' cancellation. From there, the drummer backtracks to his early life – a bookie's son from Rotherham, World Cup-winning goalie Gordon's nephew, and a string of anonymous punk bands – but it's not until 1985 when he meets Jarvis Cocker in a bar queue that his story truly grips. Banks's eye for detail serves the Pulp era well, charting the rise from "indie backwater also-rans to sleazy, sleek pop machine", and Jarvis's parallel transformation. He is insightful about the highs and lows of fame, and especially Cocker's character; more mercurial than the singer's public persona suggests, with periodic meltdowns. "After years of chasing success… when it arrived, it didn't quite live up to the billing," Banks suggests. Until Cocker writes his own Pulp history, this is the definitive version.

Martin Aston



Young pioneer: Thurston Moore on-stage with Sonic Youth at Folk City, New York, December 1, 1982.

Catherine Ceresole

Watched by Vanessa Redgrave (bottom left), Joan Baez performs at an anti-Vietnam War demonstration in Trafalgar Square, London, May 29, 1965.

Getty

She shall overcome

With access to the folk legend's vast personal archive, a new doc finds Joan Baez facing her demons. By Sylvie Simmons.

Joan Baez: I Am A Noise

★★★★

Dir: Miri Navasky, Maeve O'Boyle, Karen O'Connor

MAGNOLIA PICTURES. C/ST

IT BEGINS with a close-up on Joan Baez's young face, singing an African-American spiritual, Oh Freedom. Her expression is grave and earnest, her voice the spell-binding soprano that Dylan described not long ago – on his website; he's not in the film in person – as "like a siren from off some Greek Island."

It's a clever start, encompassing most of what the average person knows about Baez: folk music legend; civil rights and peace activist with the voice of an angel. But the second Baez documentary this century (following 2009's Joan Baez: How Sweet The Sound) adds some new strands to the story. Almost all belong in the third part of the Gabriel Garcia Márquez quote that appears at the beginning: "Everyone has three lives: the public, the private and the secret."

As the movie covers her biography – segueing back and forth in time and space between old home movies, her current home in the woods, her first stage performance at 17 and her last at 78 – the secrets slowly start to emerge, announced by a slightly annoying ongoing device of what sounds like meditation tapes. They're actually recordings of therapy sessions – part of Baez's vast archive of journals, letters, film, photos, audio correspondence and illustrated books to which the three directors had access.

From the outside, hers looks like a charmed life. Fame came instantly: a star at 18 after the 1959 Newport Folk Festival; the cover of Time magazine at 21. It caused friction with her sisters; Pauline kept her distance while Mimi [Farina] was competitive – but Joan seemed to lap it all up. "I love to be the centre of attention."

"There's an ongoing 'emotional disturbance' that brought panic attacks and phobias."

Yet there was also an ongoing "emotional disturbance" that brought panic attacks and phobias, and a "demonic" sickness if she was having too good a time.

Some of the happiest footage is of early days with Dylan, on-stage, beaming like a kid as she sings back-up on his songs. But that was only "a really short time". Dylan's 1965 in the UK finds her suddenly unwelcome in "the boys' club". Nearly 60 years on it still seems to hurt her to talk about it. "I think Dylan broke my heart. It had been such a big thing. The music, the politics."

While Dylan moved away from politics, Baez became "addicted" to activism. She went to prison. Her activist husband David Harris was in prison himself when their baby Gabriel was born. After Harris's release, the marriage didn't last. She seemed to find it easier to spend "a nice evening with 4,000 people" than one-on-one.

The documentary takes a disturbing turn when Mimi calls to ask if they should talk to a therapist about inappropriate behaviour by their father. The details might shed some light on the darkness that continued to plague Baez on her farewell tour. "Demons come and go," she says, "but these days there's a lot less anger under the smile."

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- In the mid '70s Baez developed a taste for Quaaludes. She blames drugs for the hysterical aviator album sleeve of her 18th studio LP *Blowin' Away* (1977).
- We learn of Baez's lengthy romantic relationship with a woman, though nothing about former boyfriend Steve Jobs.
- Baez's Scottish mother and Mexican father both had fathers in the clergy, but raised Joan and her sisters as Quakers.
- Baez's dad was a noted physicist who co-invented an X-ray microscope.
- Joan Baez does the best Bob Dylan impersonation in the world, period.

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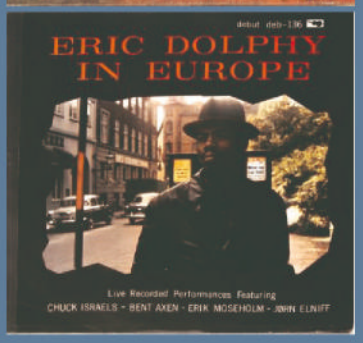

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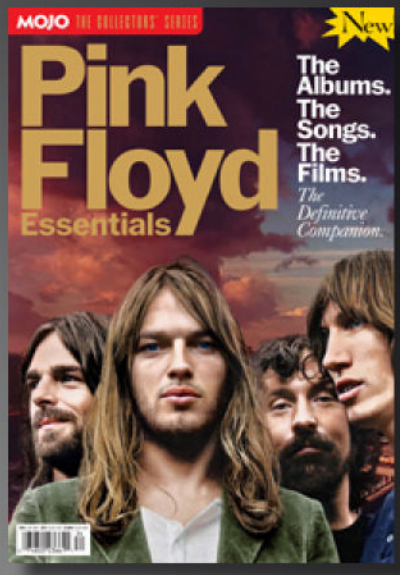

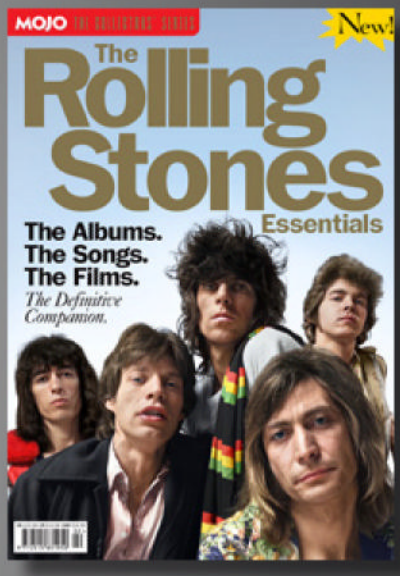

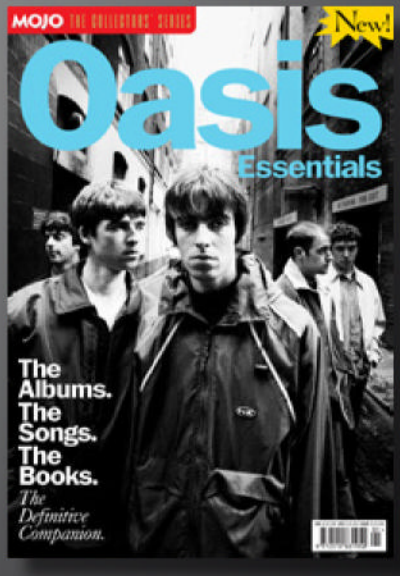

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Sweet sensation: Rodriguez in 2012 – he never gave up his quest for a better world.

The Sugar Man

Mystery superstar and liberation singer **Sixto Rodriguez** left us on August 8.

FEW PROTEST singers get to see their songs make an actual, impactful, physical social difference. In the case of Rodriguez, however, it's arguable that without his 1970 *Cold Fact* album, apartheid in South Africa might have lasted a generation longer than it did.

Jesus Sixto Diaz-Rodriguez was born in Detroit to Mexican parents on July 10, 1942. Known as Sixto – he was their sixth child – his mother died when he was three, and the family lived a typically poor immigrant Motor City life. Rodriguez wasn't like the others, however. His wife Konny later described him as "a really eccentric guy" who she first noticed at Wayne State University walking down the street with a guitar. That was 1972, and his music career had already flamed out after two albums of psychedelic folk protest: *Cold Fact* and 1971's *Coming From Reality*. Neither had scraped much beyond three-figure sales.

In South Africa, however, something unparalleled was unfolding. No one really knows who or how, but someone came back to South Africa carrying *Cold Fact*. Tapes were passed around like an underground manifesto, and eventually it sold over half a million copies. *Cold Fact*'s impact on a generation of white kids in a country that resisted introducing TV until 1976 because it was "communist" cannot be overstated. Children were brought up with no knowledge of dissent, yet in songs about finding hope and rising up against the decay of inner-city Detroit, such as Hate Street Dialogue, The Establishment Blues and Rich Folks Hoax, young South Africans for the first time heard a voice saying that if you don't like what you saw, you should and actually *could* do something about it.

"Rumours claimed he'd self-immolated on-stage sometime in the 1970s."

THE LEGACY

The Album: *Cold Fact* (Sussex, 1970/ Light In The Attic, 2009)

The Sound: Bob Dylan, Nina Simone, Joan Baez, Marvin Gaye and Gil Scott-Heron all rolled into one. Corrupt politicians, capitalist opportunists, casual racists and violent criminals are taken to task in lyrics that often stand alone as poetry, but the folk rock touched with psychedelia elevates them into a truly transformative album.

Not that Rodriguez knew anything about this. By 1972 he was working on production lines and building sites, but never gave up political agitation, standing for Detroit mayor in '81 and '93 and the Michigan House Of Representatives in 2000.

Rodriguez finally came to attention in the UK when David Holmes used Sugar Man as the opening track on 2002 mix LP *Come Get It I Got It*, before a 2009 reissue of *Cold Fact* led to renewed international interest. Three years later came the Searching For Sugar Man documentary, following two South African fans as they tracked down the enigma that local rumours claimed had self-immolated on-stage sometime in the '70s. A 2013 Academy Award also finally earned Rodriguez belated recognition at home.

Even with that success, Rodriguez continued living in the same Detroit house he bought for $50 in the '70s, where he married and raised three daughters. Even after the crushed career, the unknown success in South Africa, and the inevitable lawsuit to recover lost royalties, Rodriguez never gave up his quest for a better world. He died after a short, undisclosed illness.

Andy Fyfe

TT News Agency/Alamy Stock Photo

Jamie Reid

Iconoclast, Sex Pistols art guru

BORN 1947

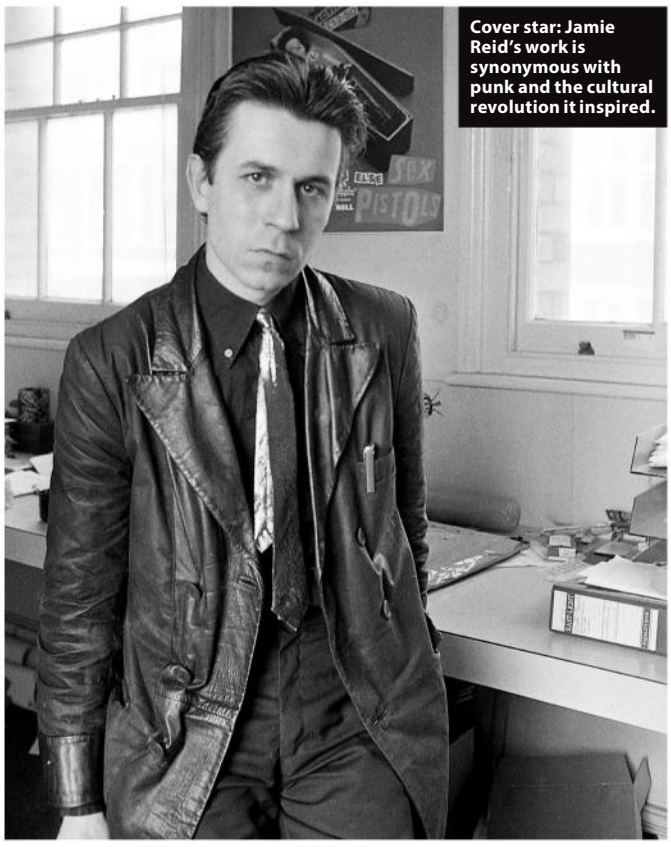
WHEN THE late Queen Elizabeth celebrated her Platinum Jubilee in 2022, anti-royalists had a readymade image to express their disdain: Jamie Reid's artwork for the Sex Pistols' God Save The Queen, showing Cecil Beaton's iconic portrait variously defaced with ransom-note lettering, safety pins and 'swastika eyes'. That 45 years after they were made, Reid's images felt as powerful – and shocking – as they did in 1977 was testament to an extraordinary artist whose work will remain synonymous with punk and the cultural revolution it inspired.

Reid had entered the Pistols' circle via manager Malcolm McLaren, whom he'd befriended during the infamous 'sit-in' at Croydon Art School in June 1968. Both had been electrified by the student riots in Paris the previous month, and revolutionary politics, art and ideas – anarchy, surrealism, Marxism, Situationist texts – soon became integral to their lives and work. For Reid, born into a family of radicals and religious dissenters (his great uncle George Watson MacGregor Reid was a leading Victorian Druid), an anti-establishment path seemed instinctive: in 1970, aged 23, he co-founded Suburban Press, a polemical magazine decrying the redevelopment of his native Croydon and, crucially, establishing his distinctive graphic style of scrawled slogans, montages, pop art tropes and cut-out lettering.

Reid's Pistols artwork, crowned by the lurid, brilliant 'bad art' for *Never Mind The Bollocks…* and continuing into the *Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle* era, made him famous, though his association with the group came at a price: scarred by the Pistols/punk experience, he all but disappeared from view in the early 1980s. However, as his work's cultural significance was recognised in the following decades, Reid became an in-demand lecturer, while continuing to design record sleeves (primarily for Afro Celt Sound System) and to make provocative political art – including God Save Damien Hirst, a 2009 pastiche of his '77 piece attacking Hirst for suing an art student for copyright infringement. He died on August 8 in his adopted city of Liverpool.

Pat Gilbert

Bernie Marsden: a player's player.



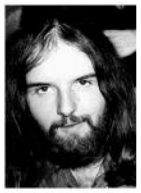
Cover star: Jamie Reid's work is synonymous with punk and the cultural revolution it inspired.

Barry Plummer, Getty (3)

John Gosling

Kinks keyboardist

BORN 1948



IN SPRING 1970, Paignton-born keyboardist John Gosling auditioned for The Kinks. This first encounter produced the sublime anthem of sexual fluidity Lola, their first UK/US Top 10 hit since 1965; soon after, Gosling donned a monkey suit to play the lead in the Apeman single promo clip. His eclectic musical pedigree thus far had included a Royal Academy education and playing church organ, as well as busking, the blues and pub piano: all suited him to the vaudevillian concepts The Kinks would explore as the '70s progressed. After returning to US chart success with 1977's *Sleepwalker*, in early 1978 Gosling and bassist Andy Pyle left, following reputed strife with guitarist Dave Davies, to form the unreleased Network. Nicknamed 'The Baptist', the good-humoured Gosling also ran a music shop, worked in Rudolf Steiner education, and in 1994 founded The Kast Off Kinks with fellow ex-members Mick Avory, Jim Rodford and John Dalton, to revisit the music of their primes. He retired in 2008.

Ian Harrison

Clarence Avant

The Black Godfather

BORN 1931

FROM CLIMAX, North Carolina, Clarence Avant met his mentor, colourful agent Joe Glaser, in Newark. Through him, he became manager to R&B and jazz artists including Little Willie John, Sarah Vaughan and Lalo Schifrin. The latter job took him to LA, where he set up Sussex Records in 1969, launching the career of Bill Withers and signing Sixto Diaz-Rodriguez. In 1973 he executive-produced the star-packed concert film Save The Children, set up the Tabu label in 1975, promoted Michael Jackson's *Bad* world tour and became chairman of Motown in '93. A tireless advocate of racial equality – he fundraised for Bill Clinton and Barack Obama – he received a Hollywood Walk Of Fame star in 2016, was subject of the 2019 documentary The Black Godfather, and in 2021 was awarded the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's Ahmet Ertegun Award. "He demanded the world make room, and he paved the way for the rest of us," said Barack Obama.

Lois Wilson

> **"Bernie Marsden had extraordinary taste, feel and wily good humour."**
> **VERNON REID**

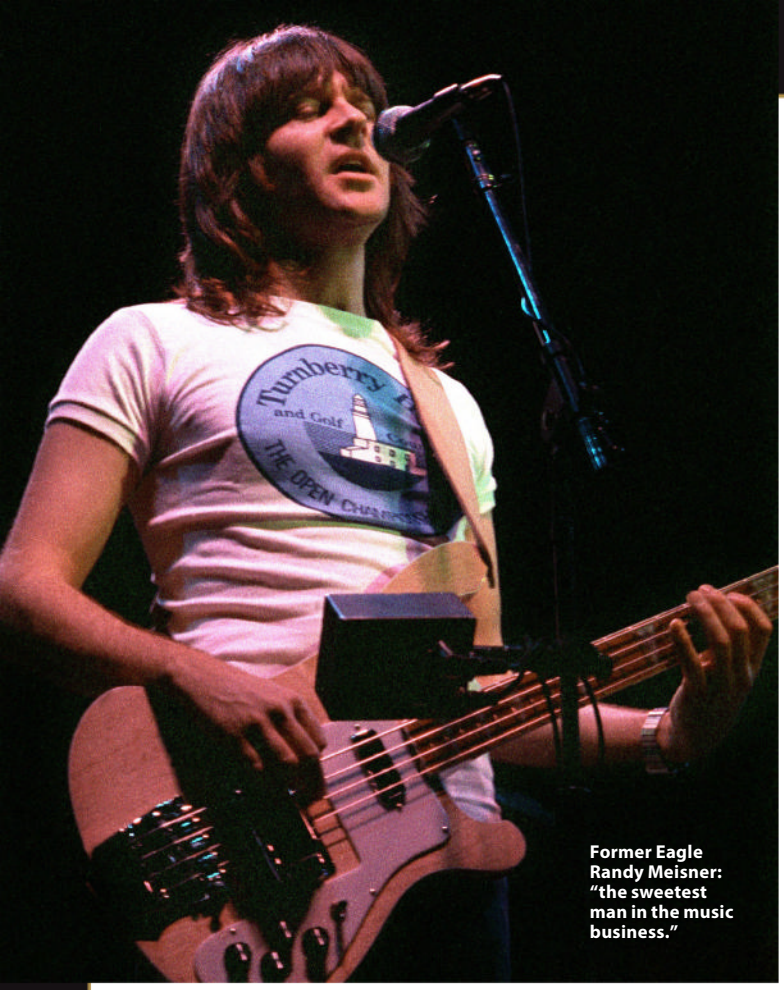
Bernie Marsden

Whitesnake's genial blues magus

BORN 1951

A VITAL FORCE over five LPs with David Coverdale's Whitesnake, Buckingham's Bernie Marsden co-wrote Fool For Your Loving and Here I Go Again, the latter a 1987 US Number 1 single for a preening, Bernie-less line-up. His great affinity with blues guitar was part-informed by Peter Green, later a close friend, and eventually saw him make a documentary-making pilgrimage to Clarksdale, Mississippi. Marsden turned pro with UFO in 1972, played with Cozy Powell, Elkie Brooks and Paice Ashton Lord, and did sessions for Hot Chocolate with Mickie Most before joining Whitesnake in 1978. Coverdale encouraged Marsden's first solo outing, 1979's *And About Time Too*, while his last, 2021's *Kings*, hymned blues majesties B.B., Albert and Freddie. When bacterial meningitis took Marsden on August 24, Living Colour's Vernon Reid mourned "a player's player of extraordinary taste, feel and wily good humour."

James McNair



Former Eagle Randy Meisner: "the sweetest man in the music business."

Randy Meisner

Founder Eagle

BORN 1946

"THE SWEETEST man in the music business," former bandmate Don Felder called him. He was certainly the gentlest and least spotlight-grabbing member of the Eagles, the band he co-founded with Don Henley, Glenn Frey and Bernie Leadon.

Like the rest of the California country rock band, Meisner wasn't Californian. A farmer's son from Scottsbluff, Nebraska, he taught himself guitar aged 10 after seeing Elvis on the Ed Sullivan TV show. At 16 he cut his first record, singing Sam Cooke's You Send Me with his popular local band the Drivin' Dynamics. By 17 he was married with a kid. He left his band for the Soul Survivors, who were heading to LA to make it big. They didn't. Meisner renamed them The Poor.

In 1968 he joined Poco, appearing on their debut but resigning soon after, upset that Richie Furay and Jim Messina barred him from the studio during mixing. He joined Rick Nelson's Stone Canyon Band, moonlighted on session jobs and played in Linda Ronstadt's backing band – which in 1971 became the Eagles.

Meisner (largely) wrote and sang lead on the Eagles' first million-selling single, Take It To The Limit. It would be an argument over that song that led him to quit the band. On the 1977 *Hotel California* tour, unwell and too exhausted to hit the high notes, he declined to sing it, resulting in a fight with Frey. When the tour ended, he quit.

He continued to play and record. Henley and Frey guested on his second album, *One More Song* (1980), and invited him on their 2013 History Of The Eagles world tour. He declined for health reasons.

In July, Meisner died from lung disease. A statement from the Eagles read: "Randy was an integral part of the Eagles and instrumental in the early success of the band. His vocal range was astonishing."

Sylvie Simmons

Gary Young

Pavement drummer, entertainer

BORN 1953

THE FIRST Pavement member attendees of early gigs would have seen was Gary Young, who would greet them at the door and bestow gifts and snacks. Nicknamed The Plantman, his was an unencumbered worldview. Born in New York (his engineer dad Bob worked developing the Steinberger bass range), after relocating to Stockton, California he was active as a booking agent and played with punks The Fall Of Christianity. In 1989 he produced and played drums on Pavement's debut EP Slay Tracks: 1933-1969. Known for his on-stage headstands, he remained with the band for 1992's murky, inspired debut *Slanted And Enchanted* but was fired, allegedly for drink-related misdemeanours, after that year's Watery, Domestic EP. He would appear on Pavement's studio farewell EP Major Leagues in 1999, and rejoin the re-formed band on-stage in 2010. He also recorded as Gary Young's Hospital, sold his hand-made Universal Shock Mounts for microphones, and was the subject of documentary portrait Louder Than You Think in 2023.

Ian Harrison

"Gary Young would greet Pavement fans at the door and bestow gifts and snacks."

Biff Rose

Musician/humourist

BORN 1937

"MAN, YOU don't have to take off your clothes to be naked," mused New Orleans-raised Paul 'Biff' Rose, in typically baffling style, to Flip magazine in 1969. Then the eccentric, unmoored singer/ pianist and former improv comedian was flying high, with debut *The Thorn In Mrs. Rose's Side* in the US charts, appearances on The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson, and his Fill Your Heart (co-written with Paul Williams) covered by Tiny Tim and, on 1971's *Hunky Dory*, by noted admirer David Bowie. Seven more heartfelt, sad, comic and sometimes deranged albums would follow (as did US tours in his red Volkswagen bus), and his Randy Newman-esque song Molly was covered by John Denver and Pat Boone; Mike Nesmith was another admirer. Ultimately, though, cult acclaim was to be his fate. He later returned to New Orleans and continued to record and create art into his eighties, his sometimes savage output explained as American satire.

Clive Prior

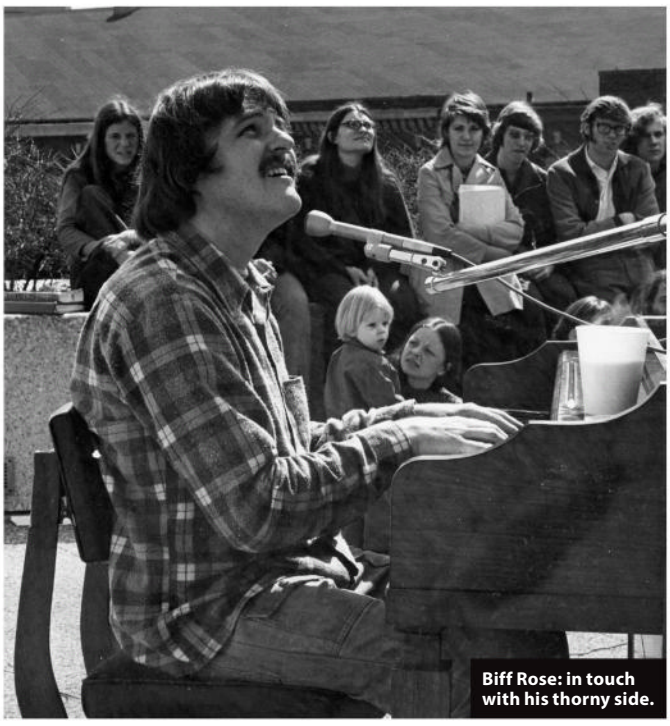
Jerry Moss

A&M executive

BORN 1935

EDUCATED AT Brooklyn college, the young Jerry Moss worked as a promotions man, squiring The Crests' doo-wopper 16 Candles to US Number 2 in 1959. In 1961 in Los Angeles, he went into business with his trumpeter friend "Herbie" Alpert. Initially recording in the latter's garage, they founded what would become A&M Records. As Alpert told MOJO last month, theirs was an artist-friendly label, and in the decades that followed A&M struck gold both populist and hip with Alpert's Tijuana Brass, Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66, Burt Bacharach, Phil Ochs, The Flying Burrito Brothers, the Carpenters, Humble Pie, Joe Cocker, Peter Frampton, The Police, Janet Jackson and many others. "There was not a band that I was involved with that I didn't love," he told Barney Hoskyns in 2005. The partners sold their hitherto independent label in 1989, and later ran the Almo Sounds imprint. Inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2006, Moss was also a philanthropist and a successful breeder of racehorses.

Ian Harrison



Biff Rose: in touch with his thorny side.

Getty (3), Gail Butenski

Erkin Koray: the Anatolian rock pioneer on-stage in Ankara, 2007.

Ron Peno

Died Pretty founder

BORN 1955

ALTHOUGH HE moved to Brisbane from the small rural New South Wales town of Narrabri in 1979, Ronald Stephen Peno eschewed the post-Saints punk scene and formed hard rock band The 31st with, among others, eventual Hoodoo Gurus guitarist Brad Shepherd. When The 31st collapsed he co-founded Screaming Tribesmen with Mick Medew, but when the line-up failed to ignite, he hi-jacked another Brisbane band, The End, which eventually became Died Pretty. After moving to Sydney the band released eight albums of hard-edged, R.E.M.-influenced indie rock between 1986 and 2002, all of which charted in Australia and throughout Europe. Over the past 20 years, between ad hoc Died Pretty re-formations, Peno also recorded with The Scientists' Kim Salmon as alt-country act Darling Downs, and Ron S Peno And The Superstitions. Cleared of esophageal cancer in 2020, the disease returned and Peno died at home in Melbourne, his wife and son at his bedside.

Andy Fyfe

Erkin Koray

Turkish rock titan

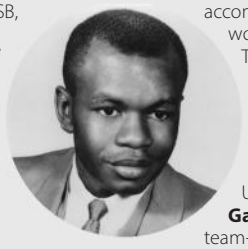
BORN 1941

BORN IN Istanbul, Erkin Koray was, like peers elsewhere, transported by early rock'n'roll and formed his first band as a teenager. After military service and playing jazz in the air force band, he went to Hamburg to play with a group called The Hiccups in the middle '60s: returning home, he resolved to mix traditional Turkish forms with the emerging increasingly psychedelic trends in international guitar-based rock. The next few years saw him form commune dwellers Yeraltı Dörtlüsü (Underground Quartet), meet Lennon and Yoko in Cannes, and go solo, painting his face glam-style and cutting Anatolian rock landmark *Elektronik Türküler* in 1974. In later years he struggled financially – the Turkish state broadcaster was not always enamoured of his output – but his work became known to new generations of admirers. He also electrified the Turkish folk instrument, the saz. He released his last LP in 1999, and had completed new music, which he entrusted to his daughter Damla. He died in Toronto.

Ian Harrison

THEY ALSO SERVED

PHILADELPHIA guitarist, producer, composer **BOBBY ELI** (b.1946) played lead with soul session aces MFSB, appearing on **Gamble & Huff** hits including Soul Train theme TSOP (The Sound Of Philadelphia). He also worked with **David Bowie**, **George Clinton**, **Elton John**, **Curtis Mayfield**, **Hall & Oates**, among others, while as a co-writer his hits included **Blue Magic**'s Sideshow (1974), **Major Harris**'s Love Won't Let Me Wait (1975), **Fat Larry's Band**'s Zoom (1982) and **Booker Newberry III**'s Love Town (1983).



LOUISIANA SOUL SINGER **TOUSSAINT McCALL** (above, b.1934) was best known for his beauteous 1967 US R&B hit Nothing Takes The Place Of You, a song covered the same year by Prince Buster. While later releases, some produced by Scotty Moore and others recorded at FAME Studios, failed to make the same impact, McCall continued to record, and appeared singing his signature song in John Waters' cult movie Hairspray in 1988.

CHICAGO **DJ CASPER** (b. William Perry Jr, 1965) had a hit in 2004 with Cha Cha Slide, a dance song written to accompany aerobic work-outs. Two more instalments of the song failed to chart, though he did later hit the UK Top 20 with **Gap Band** team-up Oops Upside Your Head.

SINGER/VIOLINIST **DAVID LAFLAMME** (b.1941) played with **Electric Chamber Orkustra** (alongside future Manson Family member **Bobby Beausoleil**) and **Dan Hicks And His Hot Licks** before co-founding, with his keyboardist wife Linda, San Fran psych folkers **It's A Beautiful Day** in 1967. The enduring White Bird was an almost-hit in 1969, and 1970's *Marrying Maiden* was a Top 30 US success, but LaFlamme left the band in 1972. After recording solo, he re-formed the group in 2000.

PROMOTIONS MAN **HAROLD CHILDS** (b.1943) worked at RCA Victor, CTI and A&M, where he worked with acts including the **Carpenters**, **The Police**, **Cat Stevens**, **The Human League** and many others. A trailblazing black notable, he later occupied executive positions at Polygram and Qwest.

COMPOSER **JIM PARKER** (b.1934) was, from the '50s, a member of folk collective the **Barrow Poets** (their 1980 single The Pheasant Plucker's Song was a hit in Australia). As well as writing widely for film and TV, he provided the music for four albums with **Sir John Betjeman**, worked with **Victoria Wood** and **John Inman**, and arranged the 1980 UK Top 5 hit Captain Beaky And His Band with **Keith Michell**.

GUITARIST **JACK SONNI** (b.1954) was working in Rudy's Music Shop in Manhattan when he met **Mark Knopfler**: in 1984 he was asked to play on Dire Straits' *Brothers In Arms*. He also joined the band for their Live Aid appearance. He later worked in marketing.

WASHINGTON-BORN **ALICE STUART** (b.1942) was a rare female folk and blues singer-guitarist-bandleader when she cut debut *All The Good Times* in 1964. An early and unrecorded member of **Zappa**'s **Mothers**, she sang the theme to X-rated **Robert Crumb** cartoon film Fritz The Cat in 1972, toured with **Mississippi John Hurt**, **Albert King**, **Van Morrison**, **Lightnin' Hopkins** and **Phil Ochs**, while her song Full Time Woman was covered by Irma Thomas, Doris Duke and Jackie DeShannon. She played on into her seventies.

BASSIST **NEAL LANGFORD** (b.1972) played with James Mercer in **Flake Music** in the '90s: they would later form **The Shins**. Langford left the group after their 2001 debut *Oh, Inverted World*, and later played with **Sad Baby Wolf**.

SONGWRITER **BOB FELDMAN** (below, b.1940), with **Jerry Goldstein** and **Richard Gottehrer**, co-wrote songs including **The Angels**' 1963 US Number 1 My Boyfriend's Back, 1965 hit I Want Candy for own band **The Strangeloves**, and Sorrow, a UK success for **The Merseys** and later **David Bowie**. They also enjoyed production success, most notably with **The McCoys**' 1964 hit Hang On Sloopy.

AMBIENT musician **BRIAN McBRIDE** (b.1970) formed **Stars Of The Lid** with **Adam Wiltzie** in Austin, 1993. They released seven albums of sublime psychotropic atmospheres from 1995 to 2007. He also released two solo LPs and was a member of **Bell Gardens**.

RAPPER **MAGOO** (below, b.Melvin Barcliff, 1973) formed a duo in Norfolk, Virginia with producer **Timbaland** in 1989. With help from **Aaliyah** and **Missy Elliott**, they went US Top 20 with 1998's Up Jumps Da Boogie, and released three albums.

VOCALIST **JOHN KEZDY** (b.1959) fronted Chicago punks the **Effigies** from 1980 to 1990, releasing three albums. The older brother of **Naked Raygun**'s Pierre Kezdy, he re-formed the band in 2004. An Illinois state prosecutor, he was wounded in the Highland Park parade mass shooting in 2022. One admirer was **Steve Albini**, who wrote in tribute: "Without John and the Effigies, I would never have made any records."

Ian Harrison and Clive Prior

Getty (4)

Down south London blues: (clockwise from left) Muddy Waters live at Fairfield Hall, October 18, 1963; Willie Dixon; (from left) Memphis Slim, Big Joe Williams, Sonny Boy Williamson II and Lonnie Johnson; (insets above) rival versions of Got My Mojo Working by Ann Cole (top) and Waters (bottom).

OCTOBER 1963
...Muddy Waters gets his Mojo working... in Croydon

OCTOBER 18 It was a lively month for package tours. Gerry And The Pacemakers, Del Shannon and Cilla Black were visiting the Odeons and Gaumonts of Britain, as was a showcase featuring Dion, Trini Lopez, Lesley Gore, Timi Yuro and others. Don Arden, meanwhile, was presenting Little Richard, Bo Diddley and The Everly Brothers, a stupendous bill completed by The Rolling Stones. "The boys and I cannot get over this opportunity to be working with such greats," gushed Stones guitarist Brian Jones.

Also playing the clubs at the time were Maidstone's The Manish Boys – who David Bowie would join in 1964 – and Merseybeaters The Mojos. The latter three bands had, of course, borrowed their name from the repertoire of Mississippi bluesman McKinley Morganfield, AKA Muddy Waters. Tonight, Waters was playing Croydon's Fairfield Hall for the Folk Blues Festival, the UK stop-off for a European jaunt which also featured Willie Dixon, Sonny Boy Williamson, Otis Spann, Memphis Slim, Victoria Spivey and Big Joe Williams.

Waters had visited Britain before, in 1958, and played a 10-date UK tour alongside Chris Barber's trad jazz group. Crowds expecting the acoustic country blues were nonplussed when he'd turned up with a white electric Fender guitar, amplified. "I was definitely too loud for them," Waters later observed. One of the songs he played, accompanied by Barber's band, was Got My Mojo Working. It was a number Waters heard in 1956 while touring the South with New Jersey R&B singer Ann Cole, penned by Preston 'Red' Foster. It concerned the African-American spiritual belief system called Hoodoo, and the amulet-in-a-bag imbued with mystic power variously known as a gris-gris bag, a trick bag and, in this case, a mojo. As he had already sung about the supernatural on Gypsy Woman, Louisiana Blues and I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man, it was a natural fit.

Cole released lively rocker Got My Mo-Jo Working (But It Just Won't Work On You) in April '57. Muddy went head-to-head with it with his harder electric blues rendition, recorded after their tour at Chess studios in Chicago in 1956, and which credited himself as the writer. He shared his thoughts on composing in James Rooney's 1971 book Bossmen: "I made up a lot of songs myself just out of the blue sky… then I'd pinch off of some other songs I heard and all that…" (a lawsuit would follow whereby original composer Foster asserted his rights).

> "My 'Mojo' song… I'm glad it started something over here."
> **MUDDY WATERS**

It was a commanding recording all right, and not without adjacent drama. Robert Gordon's biography Can't Be Satisfied recounts how, soon after they recorded it, Waters and band played East 47th Street's 708 Club in Chicago. Weary guitarist Hubert Sumlin, whose haemorrhoids had been painfully exacerbated by the 40-date tour with Cole, got electrocuted by an on-stage fan. When he said he couldn't play, an indifferent Waters went to give him a kick, and in the ensuing struggle pianist Otis Spann tried to beat him with a chain. Whereupon Sumlin returned to the band of Waters' great rival, Howlin' Wolf.

The song became Waters' calling card, and was duly played in Croydon. Some reports said the crowd were dismayed by his decision to play acoustic: solo for Captain, Captain and Rollin' Stone, and with his band for songs including Five Long Years, Blow Wind Blow and Got My Mojo Working. Photographer and writer Val Wilmer later recalled Waters

Getty (6), Alamy (2)

drinking Johnnie Walker whisky at his London hotel, bemused that crowds had wanted him electric. Enthusiastic reviews and an interview in October 26's Melody Maker headlined 'London – it's the new Chicago!' suggested a more positive reception, however. "They tell me two or three of your groups are doing my 'Mojo' song," Waters told Max Jones, as he prepared to play Pepper's Lounge on Chicago's East 43rd Street. "Very good. I'm glad it started something over here… now, when I come back, I find everyone is using electric, and playing as loud as they can get it."

In the years following, Got My Mojo Working would be covered by Manfred Mann, Graham Bond, The Zombies, Alex Harvey, Long John Baldry and more, while other Waters recordings would see versions by the Stones, Led Zeppelin, Georgie Fame, and beyond. "Let 'em play," Waters later reflected to Charles Shaar Murray. "The more they play, the better I get known."

After the Folk Blues Tour made stops in Belgium, Germany, France and Denmark, Waters was back in the States for a tour of colleges. The next year he would be back in Britain with The Blues And Gospel Train, appearing on Granada TV at an abandoned railway station in south Manchester alongside Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, Otis Spann and the Reverend Gary Davis. And so this legendary eminence of the blues carried on, touring, recording, and accepting the homage of those he'd inspired. The end came on April 30, 1983. Throughout it all, his Mojo never let him down.

Ian Harrison

Nerves out: Tony Meehan and Jet Harris (right) before the collapse.

Breakdowns stalk the Shads

OCTOBER 12 **On tour in Israel, Cliff Richard tells Melody Maker that guitarist Bruce Welch will leave The Shadows after choosing his successor, saying, "he's taking pills to check the nervous business." Two weeks later the paper reports guitarist Hank Marvin is to quit. On October 25, NME reports that it's bassist Brian 'Licorice' Locking who's leaving, citing his Jehovah's Witness faith. Earlier in October, former Shads bassman Jet Harris explains why he's split from fellow ex-Shadow Tony Meehan, despite them being in the Top 10 with their single Applejack: "my present breakdown is my second." Drummer Meehan, meanwhile, recruits ex-Pirate Joe Moretti and future fusionist John McLaughlin into his band. On October 10, Harris was arrested in Brighton for drunkenness and fined £4.**

Never sprint alone: Gerry Marsden (second right) and The Pacemakers; (inset) their current smash.

GERRY PICKS UP THE PACE

OCTOBER 31 Gerry And The Pacemakers hit UK Number 1 with their cover of Rodgers and Hammerstein's You'll Never Walk Alone, their third single and third chart-topper. They're now fully-fledged Merseybeat stars. "Love all this screaming bit," singer Gerry Marsden recently told Record Mirror. "It's marvellous. That business of having my new suit ripped up…" The song soon becomes the anthem of Liverpool FC and other clubs across the world, and will later be covered by Aretha Franklin, Elvis, Louis Armstrong, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison and Lana Del Rey. In 1985 it is re-recorded to raise monies for the Bradford City Disaster Fund by The Crowd, a charity group featuring Marsden, Phil Lynott, Paul McCartney and Motörhead, among others.

ALSO ON!

LIZ IN LONDON

6 TV special Elizabeth Taylor In London is broadcast on CBS. An album follows, with music composed by John Barry and the screen star (above) reciting poetry and speeches by Wordsworth, Churchill and Elizabeth I.

DUSTY QUITS

6 The Springfields play a farewell show at the London Palladium, before Dusty goes solo. Her solo debut I Only Want To Be With You is released in November.

MLK SUES

12 It's announced that Martin Luther King Jr has filed a suit for copyright infringement against the 20th Century Fox, Mr Maestro and Motown labels for releasing his 'I Have A Dream' speech on record. A week later Motown is dropped from the action.

FABS EXPLODE

13 Considered the true beginning of Beatlemania, The Beatles play ITV's Sunday Night At The London Palladium. Rapturously received songs include She Loves You and Twist And Shout.

A CROONER DIES

29 Singer Michael Holliday, who had Number 1s with The Story Of My Life and Starry Eyed in the late '50s, dies in a presumed suicide. The Liverpool-born crooner, who had tax problems, was seen the night before at the Soho club of boxer Freddie Mills, who will be shot dead in mysterious circumstances in 1965.

TOP TEN

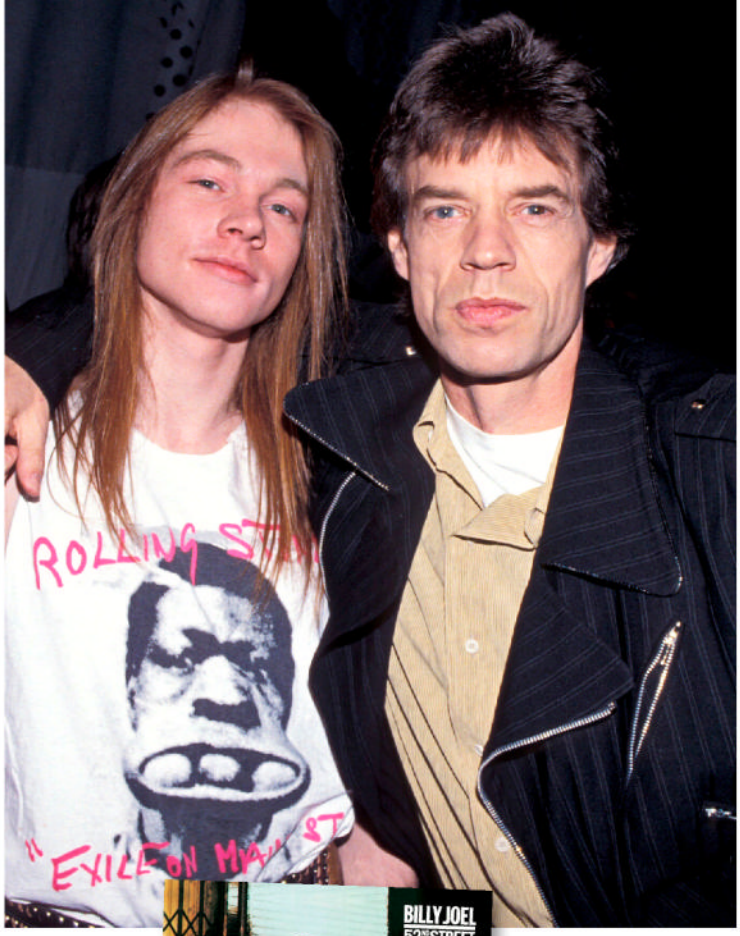
ISRAEL SINGLES OCTOBER 5

1. **BLUE ON BLUE** BOBBY VINTON EPIC
2. **GYPSY WOMAN** RICK NELSON DECCA
3. **(YOU'RE THE) DEVIL IN DISGUISE** ELVIS PRESLEY RCA VICTOR
4. **I WISH I WERE A PRINCESS** LITTLE PEGGY MARCH RCA VICTOR
5. **IL BALLO DEL MATTONE** RITA PAVONE RCA ITALY
6. **HOPELESS** ANDY WILLIAMS COLUMBIA
7. **DROWNIN' MY SORROWS** CONNIE FRANCIS MGM
8. **RING OF FIRE** JOHNNY CASH COLUMBIA
9. **I CAN'T BELIEVE** DION COLUMBIA
10. **CANDY GIRL** FOUR SEASONS VEE JAY

Jukebox jiver: at 5, Turin's Rita Pavone.

AD ARCHIVE 1963

Calling all Mods – get yourself a sleek new 'Slimstyle' Lambretta, all the better to aggravate your Triumph-riding pals, the rockers!



Collaboration games: (clockwise from left) writing partners Iggy Pop and David Bowie; Mick Jagger checks out sweet Stones merch, modelled by Axl Rose; the first CD available to buy?; third Doctor Who Jon Pertwee reverses the polarity of rock's neutron flow.

Whose inter-group co-writes were cut by both composers' bands?

Come with us as we answer your rock-related questions and uncertainties.

So Our Lips Are Sealed was co-written by Jane Wiedlin and Terry Hall of the Go-Go's and The Fun Boy Three respectively. Both bands went on to have a hit with the song. Are there any further examples of songs co-written by members of different bands both releasing the same song? The only other example I can think of is Books (or Read It In Books) written by Ian McCulloch and Julian Cope and released by both Echo & The Bunnymen and The Teardrop Explodes.

Ian Fairbank, Braintree

MOJO says: Good question, Ian. Sticking with Terry Hall, he co-wrote 1992 Lightning Seeds hit Sense and re-recorded it himself two years later, and there's plenty more where that came from. Staying with some big names: 1976 Iggy Pop/David Bowie co-write China Girl appeared on the latter's 1983 LP *Let's Dance*, reputedly to help his old pal with some publishing income; 1979 Buggles smash Video Killed The Radio Star was almost simultaneously released by its co-writer Bruce Woolley's band The Camera Club; Because The Night was co-penned by Bruce Springsteen and Patti Smith for her 1978 single and finally released by Springsteen (with, it was claimed, a re-recorded vocal) on 2010's *The Promise* box set; The Doobie Brothers' 1979 hit What A Fool Believes was actually cut first by its co-writer Kenny Loggins; Eagles' 1972 hit Take It Easy was also released by its co-composer Jackson Browne in 1973; Crosby, Stills & Nash and Jefferson Airplane both released the Crosby/Stills/Paul Kantner-composed Wooden Ships in 1969; Dee Dee Ramone/Richard Hell song Chinese Rocks was recorded by both The Heartbreakers (1977) and Ramones (1980); Bob Dylan/Rick Danko co-write This Wheel's On Fire was recorded by Dylan and The Band in '67 before The Band revisited it in '68; Genesis's *Duke* song Behind The Lines also appeared on Phil Collins' *Face Value*… the list goes on. We should also add Magazine's Shot By Both Sides and Buzzcocks' Lipstick, which were sort of written as one song by Howard Devoto and Pete Shelley but later diverged. Anyone got any other good examples?

Getty (2), Xposurephoto.com

DO OLD T-SHIRTS = £££? (REVISITED)

Back in early 2020 during a house move, I finally began selling my old '80s tour T-shirts. By the time I'd finished, I'd raised well over £5,000 and paid for a new kitchen! Prices averaged around the £20/£30 mark. Some went for over £100, the highest was £225 for an Iron Maiden 1984 World Slavery Tour sleeveless T-shirt. Programmes didn't go that well, posters did OK. I still have an old denim jacket which I'm tempted to take the tour patches off and see how they do!

John Alkins, via e-mail

Old shoegazing and C86-type indie band T-shirts seem popular. Original punk ones too, like old Clash tour T-shirts etc – they can go for loads. I sold a Siouxsie & The Banshees one and it was in absolute shreds and I'd cut the sleeves off but still got £100 for it. And the buyers know if they are not originals! They ask about seams, labels etc!

Polly Birkbeck, via e-mail

MOJO says: Thanks! There was also a story in The Guardian recently which reported that fashion company Saint Laurent have been selling old Nirvana T-shirts for thousands of pounds – it argues there's a correlation between how much a musician's rare vinyl goes for and how much their battle-scarred merch is worth, if that helps. And thanks also to reader Steve Ripley who asks, "does anyone else have a T-shirt that features the back of an LP cover, not the front?"

MORE ADDED LYRICS

Whilst I'm sure there are songs that would greatly benefit from lyrics being removed, my own favourite of added lyrics is Average White Band's version of The Crusaders' instrumental Put It Where You Want It. Still love it 50 years on.

Robbie Stubbs, via e-mail

MOJO says: Thanks Robbie! We're also thankful for the following instros-with-words-added examples: Andy Williams sang lyrics to Acker Bilk's Stranger On The Shore, Love Theme From The Godfather (as Speak Softly Love) and Theme To Love Story (as Where Do I Begin); a wacky live recording of Lightnin' Hopkins adding words to a cover of Booker T. & The M.G.'s' Green Onions; the Fat Boys/Beach Boys vocal'd-up cover of The Surfaris' Wipe Out; Love Unlimited's re-recorded vocal take of Love's Theme; and, the must-hear of the bunch, the late Jon Pertwee's Dr Who theme-with-words Who Is The Doctor?. Keep them coming please!

HELP MOJO

I've read that Billy Joel's *52nd Street* was the first album commercially available on CD (in Japan in 1982). But what was the first major label album that was *not* released on CD? And while I'm on, what was the first major label single not released on vinyl?

Matthew Wood, via e-mail

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

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Get in the game by completing the crossword, sending a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk, making sure to type CROSSWORD 360 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered. Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number. The closing date for entries is **November 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com

For more info, go to: DALI-SPEAKERS.com

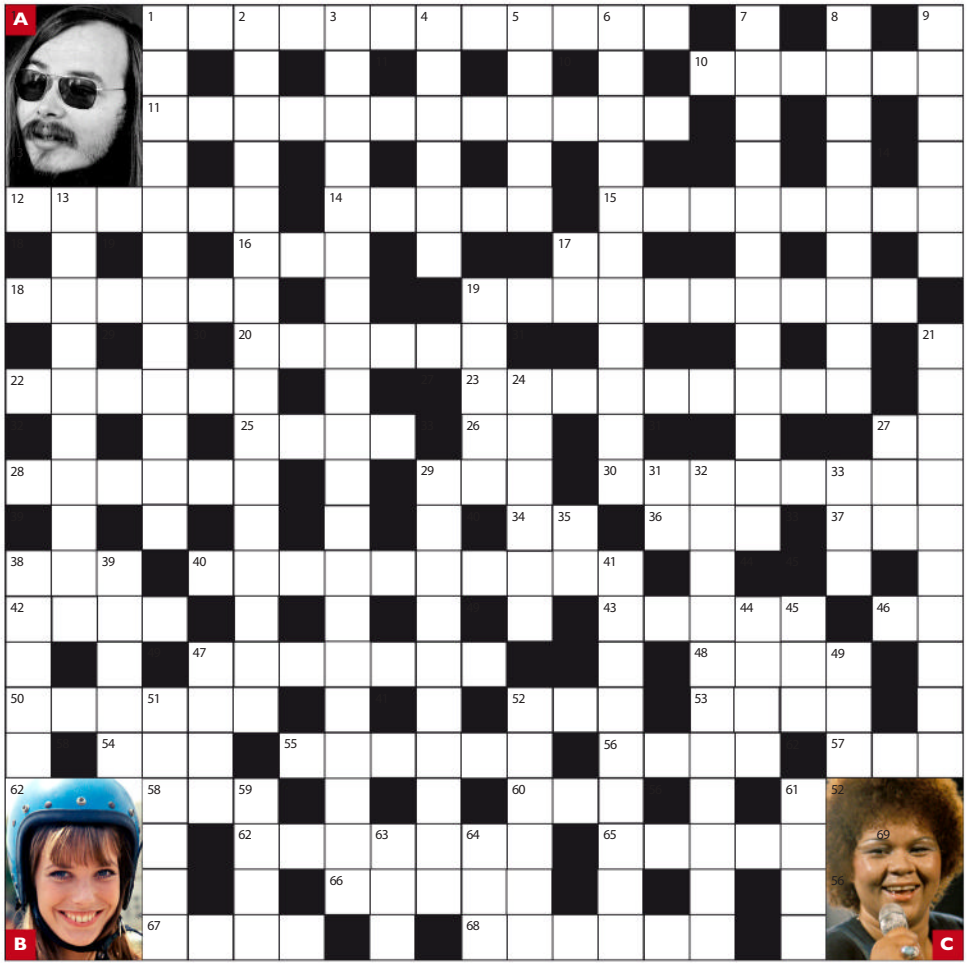
ANSWERS

MOJO 358

Across: 1 Paul McCartney, 8 Tide, 10 ABC, 11 Indian Rope Man, 12 L.A.M.F., 13 Kae, 14 Squier, 16 Improvise, 17 Tusk, 18 Vetiver, 19 Greasy, 20 Hubris, 22 Ozo, 23 Unwell, 24 Smile, 25 Thirst, 27 Eat, 28 Segue, 29 Heroin, 30 S.O.R, 32 Lights, 33 Goal, 35 Best Of, 37 Slot, 38 Tubes, 39 Ox, 40 Ape, 41 Aft, 42 Lust, 43 PR, 44 Rain Dogs, 46 NTS, 48 The Four Preps, 50 Metal, 52 Devo, 53 Or, 54 Pirates, 56 Busting Out, 57 Lorde, 58 The Old School.

Down: 1 Primitive Cool, 2 Under Me Sleng Teng, 3 Moanin, 4 Carl Perkins, 5 Reprobate's Resumé, 6 Name It You Got It, 7 Yankee Hotel Foxtrot, 8 TC Lethbridge, 9 Domestics, 15 Queen Bee, 21 Is That Love, 26 Tasteless, 31 Obel, 34 Lu, 36 Maxim, 37 Strat, 40 Ariel, 45 Stooges, 46 Nu, 47 Spreads, 49 Flit, 51 Laugh, 52 Ditto, 54 Push, 55 A.W.O.L.

Winners: Terry Hill of **Doncaster** and **Margaret Catterall** of **Ayr** both win a set of Cleer Alpha wireless intelligent noise-cancelling headphones.



Getty (3)

ACROSS

1 His biggest hit was Coconut in '72 (5,7)
10 Janis or Scott? (6)
11 See photoclue A (6,6)
12 French singer, partner of Ringo Willy Cat (6)
14 Gary Floyd's Texas punks, The ----- (5)
15 Penguin Café Orchestra matched them with *Airs* and *Yodels* (8)
16 Davy Henderson's McEwan's lager soundtracking band (3)
17 Diddley, Ningen or Eddie (2)
18 Cale and Reed made songs for him (6)
19 Lemmy's first, observant, song for Hawkwind (3,7)
20 Albert Kuvezin's Tuvan throat singers (3,3)
22 Phil Collins's was not required (6)
23 Kick Out The Tories!, it's Newtown --------- (9)
25 Catchy Blues Traveler hit from '95 (4)
26 Moby's starter (2)
27 Echobelly activate (2)
28 Songwriting great Mr Kern (6)
29 Creme, Coxhill or Mason (3)
30 Chemical Brothers' ode to liquidation? (8)
34 Chick Corea, free in '69 (2)
36 Footloose Tortoise-affiliated band (3)
37 UK label for Prince Buster, Ethiopians, etc (3)
38 Andy Partridge and Colin Moulding's band (1,1,1)
40 Motels' spot for irradiated coffee and donuts? (6,4)
43 Gene Pitney was a day away from there (5)
46 Detroit's secret service of techno (2)
47 Stan Ridgway's visceral LP from '99 (7)
48 & **42**A: Dr. Hook's romantic peepers (4,5)
50 UK label who released Chas McDevitt and Nancy Whiskey (6)
52 Late lamented Beastie Boy (3)
53 Weather Report's was *Spinnin'* (4)
54 --- Soundsystem (3)
55 James Brown's last US Top 40 hit (6)
56 Rod McKuen won a Golden Globe for this in '69 (4)
57 Elvis's first label (3)
58 Could be Machine, could be Drum (3)
60 Conor Oberst and Gillian Welch duet for the Red Hit charity in '09 (3)
62 Tim Burgess thinks finance, sings falsetto (The -------) (7)
65 AKA the African thumb piano (5)
66 A nine-piece band (5)
67 Cold Chisel's compass point (4)
68 Ron, co-writer of Atom Heart Mother (6)

DOWN

1 A Whitney Houston smash from 1985 (3,4,1,4)
2 Mott The Hoople in Lazarus mood (4,4,3,5)
3 Bobby Bland's '62 advice to keep your morals strong (5,3,2,10)
4 Eminem announces his return (2,4)
5 JD McPherson's Christmas LP (5)
6 How The Clash were left by Funk (11)
7 Billy Cobham sees the sun disappear in '74 (5,7)
8 The Fall lose sight in 2005 (9)
9 Henry Cow LP featuring Ruins (6)
13 Beatles song for a queen (3,7)
17 Beady Eye, simply existing in 2017 (2)
19 Fleetwood Mac's nocturnal dance (5)
21 See photoclue B (4,6)
24 Loop muse on the wind in 2022 (6)
27 Radical feminist band who asked Who Gave Birth To The Universe (3)
29 Little Eva's dance, The ---- ------ (4,6)
31 AKA Swedish black metal man Tony Särkkä (2)
32 Hank Mobley bops hard in 1960 (4,7)
33 Leeds bleep masters (3)
35 -- *Sorrow*, Pretty Things (1,1)
38 A colourless, odourless Plastikman alias (5)
39 Liverpool band whose *Bombar Diddlah* LP came out in '96 (5)
41 See photoclue C (4,5)
44 Lennon, O'Hagan or Combs (4)
45 GN'R's Mr Rose (3)
47 Fat White Family broke in here in 2016 (4)
49 McAlmont & Butler in the affirmative (3)
51 The Moody Blues, in eight notes (6)
52 Female rapper whose biggest hit was Cold Rock A Party (2,4)
59 Huey Lewis's band, The ---- (4)
61 Gorillaz's challenge (4)
63 Maxwell's first US Number 1 (3)
64 White, Baird or Duffy (3)

HELLO GOODBYE

MOJO at 30

In the beginning: feeling the supernatural old-and-new in Mappin House, London W1W in '93, forefathers (from left) Andy Cowles, David Hepworth, Paul Du Noyer and Mark Ellen.

Paul Du Noyer and MOJO

He began as MOJO's first editor, charged with mystic Scouse vibrations. And he stepped back when he heard the motor purring.

HELLO JANUARY 1993

I was editing Q magazine, which was so successful that you really couldn't take too many chances with it. The idea was nagging at me to start something that would be more extreme in its amount of detail, and the level of obscurity it was willing to embrace.

In its early stages, it was just me and [editorial mentor] Dave Hepworth having lunches, over which time the idea took more of a solid form. I left Q at the very end of '92, so from the beginning of '93, Andy Cowles [designer] and I were free to start on this 'spook' project, in an empty floor of an office in Great Titchfield Street. It was so vast we used to actually play football in there. The early stages were really good fun, listening to a bizarre mixture of the very old and the very new, which was part of the editorial intention for MOJO, from Muddy Waters to what was then called 'ambient techno'.

Dave's first thought was for something with very high design values – something that had 'the ethos of a fanzine and the production values of Vogue.' I said to Andy, "try and imagine the mud of the Mississippi lapping up against the walls of a Parisian nightclub!" Later [managing editor] Mark Ellen joined us, which was brilliant. He's much more of an old hippy than I am, and we had to reach out to that audience.

I don't know who came up with the name 'MOJO'. [US music 'zine] Who Put The Bomp! had always been my favourite magazine title – I liked the idea of something abstract that didn't suggest classic rock. It was also partly a tribute to the blues, and I was always prone to a certain Scouse mysticism… the supernatural side of 'MOJO' appealed to me. Andy liked it straight away. I gave him this book by Khalil Gibran – more Scouse mysticism here I'm afraid – which was in a kind of quasi-Arabic lettering style, and he worked up a logo which is still very largely the one that we recognise today.

We launched in autumn '93 and got a good response, but the best thing was, musicians really liked it. I was thrilled to get this fax, a cheerful 'thumbs up' sort of thing, from [Dr. Feelgood frontman] Lee Brilleaux, which I pinned up on the office wall to raise staff morale. I think within maybe six or seven months, we thought, It's going to last, though I'd never have dreamed it would be for 30 years.

GOODBYE EARLY 1995

My personal mission was not to edit beyond the launch period – to get the magazine up and running was my first objective, and the second was to have a magazine that I really wanted to write for. I'd spent a lot of time recruiting a new editor. Mat Snow I'd known since the NME days, and Mark and I had a very, very high opinion of him – he just seemed exactly right for MOJO, as a writer and an editor, and so it proved.

My last day? There would have been a drink-up in the Clachan pub on Kingly Street or somewhere, but I don't remember a speech and the handover was not immediate. Mat was probably there for a while before I left and I was back in the office the next week, because I looked after the reviews section for a few months, just to ease the process. I kept a low profile, and Mark was still around. He was kind of the overall chief of the editorial project along with David – really, he was the *éminence grise* of the whole thing.

I take great pleasure actually, and a certain amount of pride, in just how good MOJO is, and I'm very pleased to think I had some hand in getting it going. I mean, the magazine got better. Ideas are relatively easy, it's the execution that matters, and how a team of people can get every bit of it right, and keep refreshing it. And so many discerning people became its readers. We always used to say MOJO was not for people whose clocks had stopped, you know? They'd never lost their curiosity for new music.

In my head, chronology isn't very important. Whatever was created in the past is in some sense informing the great new music that gets made now. I think, and this is pure dopey Scouse mysticism, all music kind of exists simultaneously. Somewhere, in some dimension, Elvis Presley is stepping up to a microphone to sing Heartbreak Hotel for the very first time, and that is something that is close to the secret, I think, of MOJO.

As told to Ian Harrison

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Chris Walter, Paul Du Noyer, Clive Prior

"Try and imagine the mud of the Mississippi lapping up against the walls of a Parisian nightclub..."
PAUL DU NOYER

Movin' on: (from left) MOJO men Mat Snow, Jim Irvin, Barney Hoskyns and Paul Du Noyer, 1995; (left) Paul today.

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